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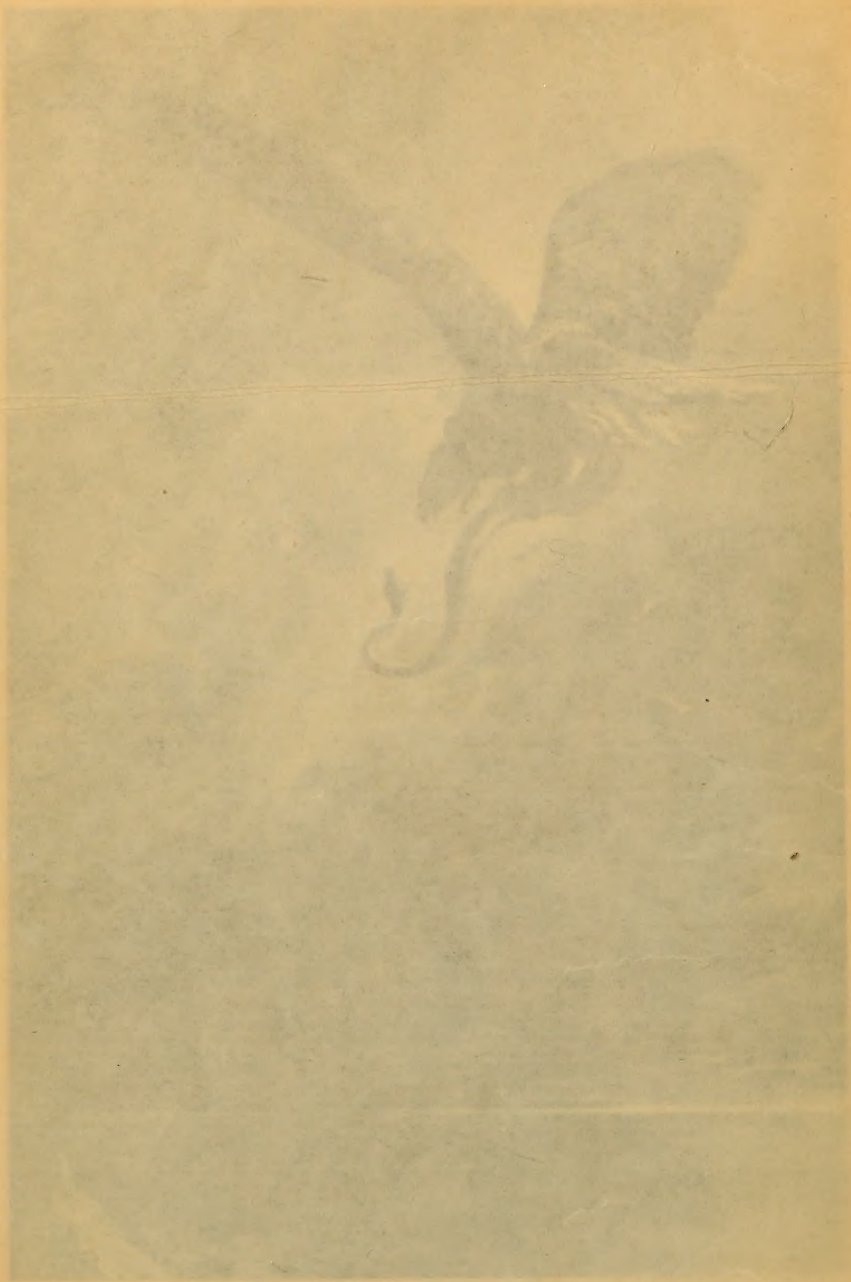
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The Revolt of Islam



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The Eagle and Serpent Wreathed in Fight.

"With beak and talon unremittingly assailed the wreathed Serpent."

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The Complete Works of
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY



THE
REVOLT OF ISLAM

EDITED BY
Nathan Haskell Dole



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Preface



THE poem which I now present to the world is an attempt from which I scarcely dare to expect success, and in which a writer of established fame might fail without disgrace. It is an experiment on the temper of the public mind as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live. I have sought to enlist the harmony of metrical language, the ethereal combinations of the fancy, the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion, all those elements which essentially compose a poem, in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality ; and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of

Preface

liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor misrepresentation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind.

For this purpose I have chosen a story of human passion in its most universal character, diversified with moving and romantic adventures, and appealing, in contempt of all artificial opinions or institutions, to the common sympathies of every human breast. I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind by methodical and systematic argument. I would only awaken the feelings, so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed, and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world. The poem therefore (with the exception of the first canto, which is purely introductory) is narrative, not didactic. It is a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses

Preface

of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses ; its impatience at “ all the oppressions that are done under the sun ; ” its tendency to awaken public hope, and to enlighten and improve mankind ; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency ; the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and degradation to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom : the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors, and the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they had been deluded into submission ; the tranquillity of successful patriotism, and the universal toleration and benevolence of true philanthropy ; the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers ; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity ; the faithlessness of tyrants ; the confederacy of the rulers of the world, and the restoration of the expelled dynasty by foreign arms ; the massacre and extermination of the patriots, and the victory of established power ; the consequences of legitimate despotism, — civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections ; the judicial murder of the advocates of liberty ; the temporary

Preface

triumph of oppression, that secure earnest of its final and inevitable fall ; the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue. Such is the series of delineations of which the poem consists. And, if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and strong such as belongs to no meaner desires, let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings in the vivid presence of which within his own mind consists at once his inspiration and his reward.

The panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all classes of men during the excesses consequent upon the French Revolution is gradually giving place to sanity. It has ceased to be believed that whole generations of mankind ought to consign themselves to a hopeless inheritance of ignorance and misery, because a nation of men who had been dupes and

Preface

slaves for centuries were incapable of conducting themselves with the wisdom and tranquillity of freemen so soon as some of their fetters were partially loosened. That their conduct could not have been marked by any other characters than ferocity and thoughtlessness is the historical fact from which liberty derives all its recommendations, and falsehood the worst features of its deformity. There is a reflux in the tide of human things which bears the shipwrecked hopes of men into a secure haven after the storms are past. Methinks, those who now live have survived an age of despair.

The French Revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilized mankind produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the improvement or gradual abolition of political institutions. The year 1788 may be assumed as an epoch of one of the most important crises produced by this feeling. The sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which participated the most extensively in these sympathies. But such a

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degree of unmingled good was expected as it was impossible to realize. If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues, and the reëstablishment of successive tyrannies in France, was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilized world. Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue. Such is the lesson which experience teaches now. But, on the first reverses of

Preface

hope in the progress of French liberty, the sanguine eagerness for good overleaped the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus, many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics,¹ and inquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those² of Mr. Malthus, calculated to lull the

¹ I ought to except Sir W. Drummond's "Academical Questions," a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism.

² It is remarkable, as a symptom of the revival of public hope, that Mr. Malthus has assigned, in the later editions of his work, an indefinite dominion to moral restraint over the principle of

Preface

oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following poem.

I do not presume to enter into competition with our greatest contemporary poets. Yet I am unwilling to tread in the footsteps of any who have preceded me. I have sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or versification peculiar to the original minds of which it is the character; designing that, even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own. Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words to divert the attention of the reader, from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving to disgust him according to the rules of criticism. I have simply clothed my thoughts in what population. This concession answers all the inferences from his doctrine unfavourable to human improvement, and reduces the "Essay on Population" to a commentary illustrative of the unanswerableness of "Political Justice."

Preface

appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

There is an education peculiarly fitted for a poet, without which genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education, indeed, can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favourable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea, and the solitude of forests; Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers,

Preface

and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war; cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country has been to me, like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my poem have been drawn. I have considered poetry in its most comprehensive sense; and have read the poets and the historians and the metaphysicians¹ whose writings have been accessible to me, and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scenery of the earth, as

¹ In this sense there may be such a thing as perfectibility in works of fiction, notwithstanding the concession often made by the advocates of human improvement, that perfectibility is a term applicable only to science.

Preface

common sources of those elements which it is the province of the poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer do not in themselves constitute men poets, but only prepare them to be the auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which, with an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.

I have avoided, as I have said before, the imitation of any contemporary style. But there must be a resemblance, which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live; though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. Thus, the tragic poets of the age of Pericles; the Italian revivers of ancient

Preface

learning; those mighty intellects of our own country that succeeded the Reformation, the translators of the Bible, Shakespeare, Spenser, the dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth, and Lord Bacon;¹ the colder spirits of the interval that succeeded;—all resemble each other, and differ from every other in their several classes. In this view of things, Ford can no more be called the imitator of Shakespeare than Shakespeare the imitator of Ford. There were perhaps few other points of resemblance between these two men than that which the universal and inevitable influence of their age produced. And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler nor the sublimest genius of any era can escape; and which I have not attempted to escape.

I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful), not because I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity; you must either succeed or fail. This perhaps an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed also by the brilliancy

¹ Milton stands alone in the age which he illumined.

Preface

and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt; and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left, most inadvertently, an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.

But in this as in every other respect I have written fearlessly. It is the misfortune of this age that its writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang up in that torpid interval when poetry was not. Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never presumed to assert an understanding of its own: it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded, the opinion of mankind, and would even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest poets to impose

Preface

gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations, and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought therefore to write, as I believe that Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton wrote, in utter disregard of anonymous censure. I am certain that calumny and misrepresentation, though it may move me to compassion, cannot disturb my peace. I shall understand the expressive silence of those sagacious enemies who dare not trust themselves to speak. I shall endeavour to extract, from the midst of insult and contempt and maledictions, those admonitions which may tend to correct whatever imperfections such censurers may discover in this my first serious appeal to the public. If certain critics were as clear-sighted as they are malignant, how great would be the benefit to be derived from their virulent writings! As it is, I fear I shall be malicious enough to be amused with their paltry tricks and lame invectives. Should the public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality ; and shall seek to gather,

Preface

if I live, strength from that defeat, which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may *not* be worthless. I cannot conceive that Lucretius, when he meditated that poem whose doctrines are yet the basis of our metaphysical knowledge, and whose eloquence has been the wonder of mankind, wrote in awe of such censure as the hired sophists of the impure and superstitious noblemen of Rome might affix to what he should produce. It was at the period when Greece was led captive, and Asia made tributary to the Republic, fast verging itself to slavery and ruin, that a multitude of Syrian captives, bigoted to the worship of their obscene Ashtaroth, and the unworthy successors of Socrates and Zeno, found there a precarious subsistence by administering, under the name of freedmen, to the vices and vanities of the great. These wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of sophisms, in favour of that contempt for virtue which is the portion of slaves, and that faith in portents, the most fatal substitute for benevolence in the imaginations of men, which, arising from the enslaved communities of the East, then first began to overwhelm the western

Preface

nations in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe? The latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

The poem now presented to the public occupied little more than six months in the composition. That period has been devoted to the task with unremitting ardour and enthusiasm. I have exercised a watchful and earnest criticism on my work as it grew under my hands. I would willingly have sent it forth to the world with that perfection which long labour and revision is said to bestow. But I found that, if I should gain something in exactness by this method, I might lose much of the newness and energy of imagery and language as it flowed fresh from my mind. And, although the mere composition occupied no more than six months, the thoughts thus arranged were slowly gathered in as many years.

I trust that the reader will carefully distinguish between those opinions which have a dramatic propriety in reference to the char-

Preface

acters which they are designed to elucidate, and such as are properly my own. The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. The belief which some superstitious persons whom I have brought upon the stage entertain of the Deity, as injurious to the character of his benevolence, is widely different from my own. In recommending also a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those violent and malignant passions of our nature which are ever on the watch to mingle with and to alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to revenge, or envy, or prejudice. Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.





Dedication

“There is no danger to a man that knows
What life and death is : there’s not any law
Exceeds his knowledge : neither is it lawful
That he should stoop to any other law.”

CHAPMAN.

To Mary ———

I.



O now my summer task is ended,
Mary,
And I return to thee, mine own
heart’s home ;
As to his Queen some victor Knight of
Faëry,
Earning bright spoils for her enchanted
dome ;

Dedication

Nor thou disdain that, ere my fame be-
come

A star among the stars of mortal night,
If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom,
Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
With thy beloved name, thou Child of love
and light.

II.

The toil which stole from thee so many an
hour

Is ended — and the fruit is at thy feet !
No longer where the woods to frame a
bower

With interlacèd branches mix and meet,
Or where, with sound like many voices
sweet,

Waterfalls leap among wild islands green
Which framed for my lone boat a lone
retreat

Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be
seen :

But beside thee, where still my heart has ever
been.

Dedication

III.

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear
Friend, when first
The clouds which wrap this world from
youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep: a fresh May-dawn it
was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering
grass,
And wept, I knew not why: until there rose
From the near schoolroom voices that, alas!
Were but one echo from a world of woes —
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and
of foes.

IV.

And then I clasped my hands, and looked
around,
But none was near to mock my streaming
eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the
sunny ground —

Dedication

So, without shame, I spake : — “ I will be
wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
Without reproach or check.” I then con-
trolled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was
meek and bold.

v.

And from that hour did I with earnest
thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines
of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret
store
Wrought linkèd armour for my soul, be-
fore
It might walk forth to war among mankind ;
Thus power and hope were strengthened
more and more

Dedication

Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which
I pined.

VI.

Alas that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in
one! —
Such once I sought in vain; then black
despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was
thrown
Over the world in which I moved
alone: —
Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts, and cold, like weights of icy
stone
Which crushed and withered mine, that
could not be
Aught but a lifeless clog, until revived by thee.

VII.

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry
heart

Dedication

Fell, like bright Spring upon some herb-
less plain,
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
In thy young wisdom, when the mortal
chain
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in
twain,
And walk as free as light the clouds among,
Which many an envious slave then
breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit
sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt
it long!

VIII.

No more alone through the world's wilder-
ness,
Although I trod the paths of high
intent,
I journeyed now: no more companion-
less,
Where solitude is like despair, I went. —
There is the wisdom of a stern content

Dedication

When Poverty can blight the just and good,
When Infamy dares mock the innocent,
And cherished friends turn with the multitude
To trample : this was ours, and we unshaken
stood !

IX.

Now has descended a serener hour,
And, with inconstant fortune, friends return ;
Though suffering leaves the knowledge and
the power
Which says " Let scorn be not repaid
with scorn."
And from thy side two gentle babes are
born
To fill our home with smiles, and thus
are we
Most fortunate beneath life's beaming
morn :
And these delights, and thou, have been
to me
The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

Dedication

x.

Is it that now my inexperienced fingers
But strike the prelude of a loftier strain?
Or must the lyre on which my spirit lingers
Soon pause in silence, ne'er to sound
again,
Though it might shake the Anarch Custom's reign,
And charm the minds of men to Truth's
own sway,
Holier than was Amphion's? I would
fain
Reply in hope — but I am worn away,
And Death and Love are yet contending for
their prey.

xi.

And what art thou? I know, but dare not
speak:
Time may interpret to his silent years.
Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
And in the light thine ample forehead
wears,

xxx

Dedication

And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy
tears,
And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
Is whispered, to subdue my fondest fears :
And, through thine eyes, even in thy soul
I see
A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

XII.

They say that thou wert lovely from thy
birth,
Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.
I wonder not — for One then left this earth
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
Which clothed thee in the radiance unde-
filed
Of its departing glory ; still her fame
Shines on thee, through the tempests dark
and wild
Which shake these latter days ; and thou
canst claim
The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal
name.

Dedication

XIII.

One voice came forth from many a mighty
spirit
Which was the echo of three thousand
years ;
And the tumultuous world stood mute to
hear it,
As some lone man who in a desert hears
The music of his home : — unwonted fears
Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
And Faith and Custom and low-thoughted
cares,
Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
Left the torn human heart, their food and
dwelling-place.

XIV.

Truth's deathless voice pauses among man-
kind !
If there must be no response to my cry —
If men must rise and stamp, with fury
blind,

Dedication

On his pure name who loves them, —
thou and I,
Sweet friend! can look from our tranquillity
Like lamps into the world's tempestuous
night, —
Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by
Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's sight,
That burn from year to year with unextinguished light.



The Revolt of Islam

A Poem in Twelve Cantos



The Revolt of Islam

Canto I.

I.



WHEN the last hope of trampled
France had failed
Like a brief dream of unremain-
ing glory,
From visions of despair I rose, and scaled
The peak of an aërial promontory,
Whose caverned base with the vext surge
was hoary ;
And saw the golden dawn break forth, and
waken
Each cloud and every wave : — but tran-
sitory

The Revolt of Islam

The calm : for sudden the firm earth was
shaken,
As if by the last wreck its frame were overtaken.

II.

So as I stood, one blast of muttering thunder
Burst in far peals along the waveless
deep,
When, gathering fast, around, above, and
under,
Long trains of tremulous mist began to
creep,
Until their complicating lines did steep
The orient sun in shadow : — not a sound
Was heard ; one horrible repose did keep
The forests and the floods, and all around
Darkness more dread than night was poured
upon the ground.

III.

Hark ! 'tis the rushing of a wind that sweeps
Earth and the ocean. See ! the lightnings
yawn

The Revolt of Islam

Deluging Heaven with fire, and the lashed
deeps

Glitter and boil beneath : it rages on,
One mighty stream, whirlwind and waves
upthrown,
Lightning and hail, and darkness eddying
by.

There is a pause — the sea-birds, that were
gone
Into their caves to shriek, come forth, to
spy
What calm has fallen on earth, what light is in
the sky.

IV.

For, where the irresistible storm had cloven
That fearful darkness, the blue sky was
seen

Fretted with many a fair cloud interwoven
Most delicately, and the ocean green,
Beneath that opening spot of blue serene,
Quivered like burning emerald : calm was
spread

On all below ; but far on high, between

The Revolt of Islam

Earth and the upper air, the vast clouds fled,
Countless and swift as leaves on autumn's tem-
pest shed.

V.

For ever, as the war became more fierce
Between the whirlwinds and the rack on
high,
That spot grew more serene ; blue light did
pierce
The woof of those white clouds, which
seem to lie
Far, deep, and motionless ; while through
the sky
The pallid semicircle of the moon
Passed on, in slow and moving majesty ;
Its upper horn arrayed in mists, which
soon
But slowly fled, like dew beneath the beams
of noon.

VI.

I could not choose but gaze ; a fascination
Dwelt in that moon and sky and clouds,
which drew

The Revolt of Islam

My fancy thither, and in expectation
Of what, I knew not, I remained : the
hue
Of the white moon, amid that heaven so
blue,
Suddenly stained with shadow did appear ;
A speck, a cloud, a shape, approaching
grew,
Like a great ship in the sun's sinking sphere
Beheld afar at sea, and swift it came anear.

VII.

Even like a bark, which from a chasm of
mountains,
Dark, vast, and overhanging, on a river
Which there collects the strength of all its
fountains,
Comes forth, whilst with the speed its
frame doth quiver,
Sails, oars, and stream, tending to one
endeavour ;
So, from that chasm of light a wingèd Form,
On all the winds of heaven approaching ever,

The Revolt of Islam

Floated, dilating as it came : the storm
Pursued it with fierce blasts, and lightnings
swift and warm.

VIII.

A course precipitous, of dizzy speed,
Suspending thought and breath ; a mon-
strous sight !
For in the air do I behold indeed
An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in
fight : —
And now, relaxing its impetuous flight
Before the aerial rock on which I stood,
The Eagle, hovering, wheeled to left and
right,
And hung with lingering wings over the
flood,
And startled with its yells the wide air's soli-
tude.

IX.

A shaft of light upon its wings descended,
And every golden feather gleamed
therein —
Feather and scale inextricably blended.

The Revolt of Islam

The Serpent's mailed and many-coloured
skin

Shone through the plumes its coils were
twined within

By many a swoln and knotted fold, and high
And far the neck, receding lithe and
thin,

Sustained a crested head, which warily
Shifted and glanced before the Eagle's stead-
fast eye.

x.

Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling
With clang of wings and scream, the
Eagle sailed

Incessantly — sometimes on high concealing
Its lessening orbs, sometimes, as if it failed,
Drooped through the air; and still it
shrieked and wailed,

And, casting back its eager head, with beak
And talon unremittingly assailed

The wreathèd Serpent, who did ever seek
Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to
wreak.

The Revolt of Islam

XI.

What life, what power, was kindled and arose
 Within the sphere of that appalling fray !
For, from the encounter of those wondrous
 foes,
 A vapour like the sea's suspended spray
 Hung gathered : in the void air, far away,
Floated the shattered plumes : bright scales
 did leap,
 Where'er the Eagle's talons made their
 way,
Like sparks into the darkness ;— as they
 sweep,
Blood stains the snowy foam of the tumultu-
 ous deep.

XII.

Swift chances in that combat—many a
 check,
 And many a change, a dark and wild
 turmoil ;
Sometimes the Snake around his enemy's
 neck

The Revolt of Islam

Locked in stiff rings his adamantine coil,
Until the Eagle, faint with pain and toil,
Remitted his strong flight, and near the
sea

Languidly fluttered, hopeless so to foil
His adversary, who then reared on high
His red and burning crest, radiant with victory.

XIII.

Then on the white edge of the bursting
surge,

Where they had sunk together, would the
Snake

Relax his suffocating grasp, and scourge

The wind with his wild writhings ; for, to
break

That chain of torment, the vast bird
would shake

The strength of his unconquerable wings

As in despair, and with his sinewy neck

Dissolve in sudden shock those linkèd rings,

Then soar — as swift as smoke from a volcano
springs.

The Revolt of Islam

XIV.

Wile baffled wile, and strength encountered
strength,

Thus long, but unprevailing : — the event
Of that portentous fight appeared at length :
Until the lamp of day was almost spent
It had endured, when lifeless, stark, and
rent,

Hung high that mighty Serpent, and at
last

Fell to the sea, — while o'er the continent,
With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle
past,
Heavily borne away on the exhausted blast.

XV.

And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean
And earth and sky shone through the
atmosphere —

Only, 'twas strange to see the red commotion
Of waves like mountains o'er the sinking
sphere

The Revolt of Islam

Of sunset sweep, and their fierce roar to
hear

Amid the calm :— down the steep path I
wound

To the seashore — the evening was most
clear

And beautiful ; and there the sea I found
Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber
bound.

XVI.

There was a Woman, beautiful as morning,
Sitting beneath the rocks upon the sand
Of the waste sea — fair as one flower adorn-
ing

An icy wilderness — each delicate hand
Lay crossed upon her bosom, and the
band

Of her dark hair had fall'n, and so she
sate,

Looking upon the waves ; on the bare
strand

Upon the sea-mark a small boat did wait,
Fair as herself, like Love by Hope left desolate.

The Revolt of Islam

XVII.

It seemed that this fair Shape had looked
upon
That unimaginable fight, and now
That her sweet eyes were weary of the sun,
As brightly it illustrated her woe;
For in the tears, which silently to flow
Paused not, its lustre hung : she, watching aye
The foam-wreaths which the faint tide
wove below
Upon the spangled sands, groaned heavily,
And after every groan looked up over the sea.

XVIII.

And when she saw the wounded Serpent make
His path between the waves, her lips grew
pale,
Parted, and quivered : the tears ceased to
break
From her immovable eyes ; no voice of
wail
Escaped her ; but she rose, and, on the gale

The Revolt of Islam

Loosening her star-bright robe and shadowy
hair,

Poured forth her voice; the caverns of
the vale

That opened to the ocean caught it there,
And filled with silver sounds the overflowing
air.

XIX.

She spake in language whose strange melody
Might not belong to earth. I heard
alone —

What made its music more melodious be —
The pity and the love of every tone;
But to the Snake those accents sweet were
known

His native tongue and hers: nor did he
beat

The hoar spray idly then, but, winding
on

Through the green shadows of the waves
that meet

Near to the shore, did pause beside her snowy
feet.

The Revolt of Islam

xx.

Then on the sands the Woman sate again,
And wept and clasped her hands, and, all
between,
Renewed the unintelligible strain
Of her melodious voice and eloquent
mien ;
And she unveiled her bosom, and the
green
And glancing shadows of the sea did play
O'er its marmoreal depth — one moment
seen :
For ere the next the Serpent did obey
Her voice, and, coiled in rest, in her embrace
it lay.

xxi.

Then she arose, and smiled on me with eyes
Serene yet sorrowing, like that planet
fair,
While yet the daylight lingereth in the skies,
Which cleaves with arrowy beams the
dark red air, —

The Revolt of Islam

And said : " To grieve is wise, but the
despair
Was weak and vain which led thee here
from sleep :
This shalt thou know, and more, if thou
dost dare,
With me and with this Serpent, o'er the deep,
A voyage divine and strange, companionship
to keep."

XXII.

Her voice was like the wildest, saddest tone,
Yet sweet, of some loved voice heard
long ago.
I wept. " Shall this fair woman all alone
Over the sea with that fierce Serpent go ?
His head is on her heart, and who can
know
How soon he may devour his feeble prey ? "
Such were my thoughts, when the tide gan
to flow ;
And that strange boat like the moon's shade
did sway
Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay : —

The Revolt of Islam

XXIII.

A boat of rare device, which had no sail
But its own curvèd prow of thin moonstone,
Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail,
To catch those gentlest winds which are
not known
To breathe, but by the steady speed alone
With which it cleaves the sparkling sea ; and,
now
We are embarked, the mountains hang and
frown
Over the starry deep that gleams below
A vast and dim expanse, as o'er the waves we
go.

XXIV.

And, as we sailed, a strange and awful tale
That Woman told, like such mysterious
dream
As makes the slumberer's cheek with wonder
pale !
'Twas midnight, and around, a shoreless
stream,

The Revolt of Islam

Wide ocean rolled, when that majestic theme
Shrined in her heart found utterance, and she
bent

Her looks on mine; those eyes a kin-
dling beam

Of love divine into my spirit sent,
And, ere her lips could move, made the air
eloquent.

xxv.

“Speak not to me, but hear! Much shalt
thou learn,

Much must remain unthought, and more
untold,

In the dark future’s ever-flowing urn :

Know then that from the depth of ages old
Two Powers o’er mortal things dominion
hold,

Ruling the world with a divided lot, —

Immortal, all-pervading, manifold,

Twin Genii, equal Gods — when life and
thought

Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessen-
tial Nought.

The Revolt of Islam

XXVI.

“The earliest dweller of the world, alone,
 Stood on the verge of chaos. Lo ! afar
O’er the wide wild abyss two meteors shone,
 Sprung from the depth of its tempestuous
 jar :
 A blood-red Comet and the Morning Star
Mingling their beams in combat — as he
 stood,
 All thoughts within his mind waged mu-
 tual war
In dreadful sympathy — when to the flood
That fair Star fell, he turned and shed his
 brother’s blood.

XXVII.

“Thus evil triumphed, and the Spirit of evil,
 One Power of many shapes which none
 may know,
One Shape of many names ; the Fiend did
 revel
In victory, reigning o’er a world of woe,

The Revolt of Islam

For the new race of man went to and fro,
Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild,
And hating good — for his immortal foe
He changed from starry shape, beauteous and mild,
To a dire Snake, with man and beast unreconciled.

XXVIII.

“The darkness lingering o’er the dawn of things
Was Evil’s breath and life; this made him strong
To soar aloft with overshadowing wings :
And the great Spirit of Good did creep among
The nations of mankind, and every tongue
Cursed and blasphemed him as he passed ;
for none
Knew good from evil, though their names
were hung

The Revolt of Islam

In mockery o'er the fane where many a
groan
As King and Lord and God the conquering
Fiend did own, —

XXIX.

“ The Fiend, whose name was Legion ; Death,
Decay,
Earthquake, and Blight, and Want, and
Madness pale,
Wingèd and wan diseases, an array
Numerous as leaves that strew the au-
tumnal gale ;
Poison, a snake in flowers, beneath the
veil
Of food and mirth hiding his mortal
head ;
And, without whom all these might
nought avail,
Fear, Hatred, Faith, and Tyranny, who
spread
Those subtle nets which snare the living and
the dead.

The Revolt of Islam

xxx.

“ His spirit is their power, and they his slaves
In air, and light, and thought, and language, dwell ;
And keep their state from palaces to graves,
In all resorts of men — invisible,
But when, in ebon mirror, Nightmare fell
To tyrant or impostor bids them rise,
Black wingèd demon forms — whom, from
the hell,
His reign and dwelling beneath nether skies,
He loosens to their dark and blasting ministries.

xxxI.

“ In the world's youth his empire was as firm
As its foundations. Soon the Spirit of
Good,
Though in the likeness of a loathsome worm,
Sprang from the billows of the formless
flood,
Which shrank and fled, — and with that
Fiend of blood

The Revolt of Islam

Renewed the doubtful war. Thrones then
first shook,

And earth's immense and trampled multi-
tude

In hope on their own powers began to look,
And Fear, the demon pale, his sanguine shrine
forsook.

XXXII.

"Then Greece arose, and to its bards and
sages,

In dream, the golden-pinioned Genii
came,

Even where they slept amid the night of
ages,

Steeping their hearts in the divinest flame
Which thy breath kindled, Power of holi-
est name!

And oft in cycles since, when darkness gave
New weapons to thy foe, their sunlike
fame

Upon the combat shone — a light to save,
Like Paradise spread forth beyond the shadowy
grave.

The Revolt of Islam

XXXIII.

“Such is this conflict — when mankind doth
strive

With its oppressors in a strife of blood,
Or when free thoughts, like lightnings, are
alive,

And in each bosom of the multitude
Justice and truth with custom’s hydra
brood

Wage silent war; when priests and kings
dissemble

In smiles or frowns their fierce disquietude,
When round pure hearts a host of hopes
assemble,

The Snake and Eagle meet — the world’s
foundations tremble !

XXXIV.

“Thou hast beheld that fight — when to thy
home

Thou dost return, steep not its hearth in
tears ;

The Revolt of Islam

Though thou may'st hear that earth is now
become
The tyrant's garbage, which to his com-
peers,
The vile reward of their dishonoured
years,
He will dividing give. — The victor Fiend,
Omnipotent of yore, now quails, and
fears
His triumph dearly won, which soon will
lend
An impulse swift and sure to his approaching
end.

xxxv.

“List, stranger, list, mine is an human form,
Like that thou wearest — touch me —
shrink not now!
My hand thou feel'st is not a ghost's, but
warm
With human blood. — 'Twas many years
ago
Since first my thirsting soul aspired to
know

The Revolt of Islam

The secrets of this wondrous world, when
deep

My heart was pierced with sympathy for
woe

Which could not be mine own—and
thought did keep,

In dream, unnatural watch beside an infant's
sleep.

xxxvi.

“Woe could not be mine own, since far from
men

I dwelt, a free and happy orphan child,
By the seashore, in a deep mountain-glen ;
And near the waves and through the
forests wild

I roamed, to storm and darkness recon-
ciled :

For I was calm while tempest shook the sky :
But, when the breathless heavens in
beauty smiled,

I wept sweet tears, yet too tumultuously
For peace, and clasped my hands aloft in
ecstasy.

The Revolt of Islam

XXXVII.

“ These were forebodings of my fate — before
 A woman’s heart beat in my virgin breast,
It had been nurtured in divinest lore :
 A dying poet gave me books, and blest
 With wild but holy talk the sweet unrest
In which I watched him as he died away —
 A youth with hoary hair — a fleeting
 guest
Of our lone mountains : and this lore did
 sway
My spirit like a storm, contending there alway.

XXXVIII.

“ Thus the dark tale which history doth
 unfold
 I knew, but not, methinks, as others
 know,
For they weep not ; and Wisdom had
 unrolled
The clouds which hide the gulf of mortal
 woe, —

The Revolt of Islam

To few can she that warning vision
show —

For I loved all things with intense devotion ;
So that, when Hope's deep source in
fullest flow,

Like earthquake, did uplift the stagnant ocean
Of human thoughts, mine shook beneath the
wide emotion.

XXXIX.

“When first the living blood through all
these veins

Kindled a thought in sense, great France
sprang forth,

And seized, as if to break, the ponderous
chains

Which bind in woe the nations of the
earth.

I saw, and started from my cottage-hearth ;
And to the clouds and waves in tameless
gladness

Shrieked, till they caught immeasurable
mirth,

The Revolt of Islam

And laughed in light and music : soon sweet
madness
Was poured upon my heart, a soft and thrill-
ing sadness.

XL.

“ Deep slumber fell on me ;— my dreams
were fire,
Soft and delightful thoughts did rest and
hover
Like shadows o’er my brain ; and strange
desire,
The tempest of a passion raging over
My tranquil soul, its depths with light
did cover, —
Which passed ; and calm and darkness,
sweeter far,
Came — then I loved ; but not a human
lover !
For, when I rose from sleep, the Morning
Star
Shone through the woodbine-wreaths which
round my casement were.

The Revolt of Islam

XLII.

“ ’Twas like an eye which seemed to smile
on me.

I watched till, by the sun made pale, it sank
Under the billows of the heaving sea ;

But from its beams deep love my spirit
drank,

And to my brain the boundless world
now shrank

Into one thought — one image — yes, for
ever !

Even like the dayspring poured on va-
pours dank,

The beams of that one Star did shoot and
quiver

Through my benighted mind — and were ex-
tinguished never.

XLIII.

“ The day passed thus : at night, methought
in dream

A shape of speechless beauty did appear :

The Revolt of Islam

It stood like light on a careering stream
Of golden clouds which shook the atmos-
phere ; —

A wingèd youth, his radiant brow did
wear

The Morning Star : a wild dissolving bliss
Over my frame he breathed, approaching
near,

And bent his eyes of kindling tenderness
Near mine, and on my lips impressed a linger-
ing kiss, —

XLIII.

“And said : ‘A Spirit loves thee, mortal
maiden :

How wilt thou prove thy worth ?’ Then
joy and sleep

Together fled, my soul was deeply laden,
And to the shore I went to muse and
weep ;

But, as I moved, over my heart did
creep

A joy less soft but more profound and
strong

The Revolt of Islam

Than my sweet dream, and it forbade to
keep

The path of the seashore : that Spirit's tongue
Seemed whispering in my heart, and bore my
steps along.

XLIV.

“ How, to that vast and peopled city led
Which was a field of holy warfare then,
I walked among the dying and the dead,
And shared in fearless deed with evil men,
Calm as an angel in the dragon's den —
How I braved death for liberty and truth,
And spurned at peace and power and
fame — and, when
Those hopes had lost the glory of their youth,
How sadly I returned — might move the
hearer's ruth.

XLV.

“ Warm tears throng fast ! the tale may not
be said —
Know then that, when this grief had been
subdued,

The Revolt of Islam

I was not left, like others, cold and dead.

The Spirit whom I loved in solitude
Sustained his child : the tempest-shaken
wood,

The waves, the fountains, and the hush of
night —

These were his voice ; and well I under-
stood

His smile divine when the calm sea was
bright

With silent stars, and Heaven was breathless
with delight.

XLVI.

“ In lonely glens, amid the roar of rivers,
When the dim nights were moonless, have
I known

Joys which no tongue can tell ; my pale lip
quivers

When thought revisits them : — know
thou alone

That, after many wondrous years were
flown,

I was awakened by a shriek of woe ;

The Revolt of Islam

And over me a mystic robe was thrown
By viewless hands, and a bright Star did glow
Before my steps—the Snake then met his
mortal foe.”

XLVII.

“Thou fearest not then the Serpent on thy
heart?”

“Fear it!” she said with brief and passion-
ate cry,—

And spake no more: that silence made me
start—

I looked, and we were sailing pleasantly,
Swift as a cloud between the sea and sky,
Beneath the rising moon seen far away;
Mountains of ice, like sapphire, piled on
high,

Hemming the horizon round, in silence lay
On the still waters,—these we did approach
alway.

XLVIII.

And swift and swifter grew the vessel's
motion,

So that a dizzy trance fell on my brain—

The Revolt of Islam

Wild music woke me: we had passed the
ocean
Which girds the pole, Nature's remotest
reign —
And we glode fast o'er a pellucid plain
Of waters, azure with the noontide day.
Ethereal mountains shone around — a
Fane
Stood in the midst, girt by green isles which
lay
On the blue sunny deep, resplendent far away.

XLIX.

It was a Temple such as mortal hand
Has never built, nor ecstasy nor dream
Reared in the cities of enchanted land:
'Twas likest Heaven ere yet day's purple
stream
Ebbs o'er the western forest, while the
gleam
Of the unrisen moon among the clouds
Is gathering — when with many a golden
beam

The Revolt of Islam

The thronging constellations rush in crowds,
Paving with fire the sky and the marmoreal
floods :

L.

Like what may be conceived of this vast
dome
When from the depths which thought can
seldom pierce
Genius beholds it rise, his native home,
Girt by the deserts of the Universe,
Yet nor in painting's light, or mightier
verse,
Or sculpture's marble language, can invest
That shape to mortal sense — such glooms
immerse
That incommunicable sight, and rest
Upon the labouring brain and overburdened
breast.

LI.

Winding among the lawny islands fair,
Whose blosmy forests starred the shad-
owy deep,

The Revolt of Islam

The wingless boat paused where an ivory
stair

Its fretwork in the crystal sea did steep
Encircling that vast Fane's aerial heap :
We disembarked, and through a portal wide
We passed — whose roof, of moonstone
carved, did keep

A glimmering o'er the forms on every side,
Sculptures like life and thought, immovable,
deep-eyed.

LII.

We came to a vast hall whose glorious roof
Was diamond, which had drank the light-
ning's sheen

In darkness, and now poured it through the
woof

Of spell-inwoven clouds hung there to
screen

Its blinding splendour — through such
veil was seen

That work of subtlest power, divine and
rare ;

Orb above orb, with starry shapes between,

The Revolt of Islam

And hornèd moons, and meteors strange and
fair,
On night-black columns poised — one hollow
hemisphere !

LIII.

Ten thousand columns in that quivering
light
Distinct — between whose shafts wound
far away
The long and labyrinthine aisles, more bright
With their own radiance than the Heaven
of Day ;
And on the jasper walls around there lay
Paintings, the poesy of mightiest thought,
Which did the Spirit's history display ;
A tale of passionate change, divinely taught,
Which in their wingèd dance unconscious Genii
wrought.

LIV.

Beneath there sate on many a sapphire
throne
The Great who had departed from man-
kind,

The Revolt of Islam

A mighty Senate ; some, whose white hair
shone

Like mountain snow, mild, beautiful, and
blind ;

Some, female forms, whose gestures beamed
with mind ;

And ardent youths, and children bright and
fair ;

And some had lyres whose strings were
intertwined

With pale and clinging flames, which ever
there

Waked faint yet thrilling sounds that pierced
the crystal air.

LV.

One seat was vacant in the midst, a throne

Reared on a pyramid like sculptured flame,

Distinct with circling steps which rested on

Their own deep fire — soon as the Woman
came

Into that hall, she shrieked the Spirit's
name,

The Revolt of Islam

And fell; and vanished slowly from the
sight.

Darkness arose from her dissolving
frame, —

Which, gathering, filled that dome of woven
light,

Blotting its spherèd stars with supernatural
night.

LVI.

Then first two glittering lights were seen to
glide

In circles on the amethystine floor,
Small serpent eyes trailing from side to
side,

Like meteors on a river's grassy shore,
They round each other rolled, dilating
more

And more — then rose, commingling into
one,

One clear and mighty planet hanging o'er
A cloud of deepest shadow which was thrown
Athwart the glowing steps and the crystalline
throne.

The Revolt of Islam

LVII.

The cloud which rested on that cone of
flame
Was cloven : beneath the planet sate a
Form
Fairer than tongue can speak or thought
may frame,
The radiance of whose limbs rose-like and
warm
Flowed forth, and did with softest light
inform
The shadowy dome, the sculptures, and
the state
Of those assembled shapes — with cling-
ing charm
Sinking upon their hearts and mine. He
sate
Majestic yet most mild — calm yet compassion-
ate.

LVIII.

Wonder and joy a passing faintness threw
Over my brow — a hand supported me,

The Revolt of Islam

Whose touch was magic strength : an eye
of blue
Looked into mine, like moonlight, soothingly ;
And a voice said : — “ Thou must a listener be
This day — two mighty Spirits now return,
Like birds of calm, from the world’s
raging sea,
They pour fresh light from Hope’s immortal urn ;
A tale of human power — despair not — list
and learn ! ”

LIX.

I looked, and lo ! one stood forth eloquently,
His eyes were dark and deep, and the
clear brow
Which shadowed them was like the morning
sky,
The cloudless Heaven of Spring, when
in their flow
Through the bright air the soft winds as
they blow

The Revolt of Islam

Wake the green world: his gestures did
obey

The oracular mind that made his features
glow,

And, where his curvèd lips half-open lay,
Passion's divinest stream had made impetuous
way.

LX.

Beneath the darkness of his outspread hair
He stood thus beautiful: but there was
One

Who sate beside him like his shadow there,
And held his hand — far lovelier — she
was known

To be thus fair by the few lines alone
Which through her floating locks and
gathered cloak,

Glances of soul-dissolving glory, shone: —
None else beheld her eyes — in him they
woke

Memories which found a tongue as thus he
silence broke.



Canto II.

I.



HE starlight smile of children, the
sweet looks
Of women, the fair breast from
which I fed,
The murmur of the unreposing brooks,
And the green light which, shifting over-
head,
Some tangled bower of vines around me
shed,
The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild
flowers,
The lamplight through the rafters cheerly
spread,
And on the twining flax—in life's young
hours
These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit's
folded powers.

The Revolt of Islam

II.

In Argolis beside the echoing sea,
Such impulses within my mortal frame
Arose, and they were dear to memory,
Like tokens of the dead:— but others
came
Soon, in another shape: the wondrous
fame
Of the past world, the vital words and
deeds
Of minds whom neither time nor change
can tame,
Traditions dark and old whence evil creeds
Start forth, and whose dim shade a stream of
poison feeds.

III.

I heard, as all have heard, the various
story
Of human life, and wept unwilling tears.
Feeble historians of its shame and glory,
False disputants on all its hopes and
fears,

The Revolt of Islam

Victims who worshipped ruin, chroniclers
Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their
state,
Yet, flattering power, had given its min-
isters
A throne of judgment in the grave — 'twas
fate
That among such as these my youth should
seek its mate.

IV.

The land in which I lived by a fell bane
Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by
side,
And stabled in our homes — until the chain
Stifled the captive's cry, and to abide
That blasting curse men had no shame —
all vied
In evil, slave and despot ; fear with lust
Strange fellowship through mutual hate
had tied,
Like two dark serpents tangled in the dust,
Which on the paths of men their mingling
poison thrust.

The Revolt of Islam

v.

Earth, our bright home, its mountains and
its waters,
And the ethereal shapes which are
suspended
Over its green expanse, and those fair
daughters,
The clouds, of Sun and Ocean, who have
blended
The colours of the air since first ex-
tended
It cradled the young world, none wandered
forth
To see or feel : a darkness had descended
On every heart : the light which shows its
worth
Must among gentle thoughts and fearless take
its birth.

vi.

This vital world, this home of happy
spirits,
Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind.

The Revolt of Islam

All that despair from murdered hope inherits
They sought, and, in their helpless misery
blind,
A deeper prison and heavier chains did
find,
And stronger tyrants : — a dark gulf before,
The realm of a stern Ruler, yawned ;
behind,
Terror and Time conflicting drove and
bore
On their tempestuous flood the shrieking
wretch from shore.

VII.

Out of that ocean's wrecks had Guilt and
Woe
Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless
thought,
And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro
Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had
brought
The worship thence which they each other
taught.

The Revolt of Islam

Well might men loathe their life ! well might
they turn
Even to the ills again from which they
sought
Such refuge after death ! well might they
learn
To gaze on this fair world with hopeless
unconcern !

VIII.

For they all pined in bondage ; body and
soul,
Tyrant and slave, victim and torturer,
bent
Before one Power, to which supreme control
Over their will by their own weakness
lent
Made all its many names omnipotent ;
All symbols of things evil, all divine ;
And hymns of blood or mockery, which
rent
The air from all its fanes, did intertwine
Imposture's impious toils round each dis-
cordant shrine.

The Revolt of Islam

IX.

I heard, as all have heard, life's various story,
And in no careless heart transcribed the
tale ;
But from the sneers of men who had grown
hoary
In shame and scorn, from groans of crowds
made pale
By famine, from a mother's desolate wail
O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood
Poured on the earth, and brows anxious
and pale
With the heart's warfare, did I gather food
To feed my many thoughts — a tameless mul-
titude !

X.

I wandered through the wrecks of days
departed
Far by the desolated shore, when even
O'er the still sea and jagged islets darted
The light of moonrise ; in the northern
heaven,

The Revolt of Islam

Among the clouds near the horizon
driven,
The mountains lay beneath one planet pale ;
Around me broken tombs and columns
riven
Looked vast in twilight, and the sorrowing
gale
Waked in those ruins gray its everlasting
wail !

XI.

I knew not who had framed these wonders
then,
Nor had I heard the story of their deeds ;
But dwellings of a race of mightier men,
And monuments of less ungentle creeds,
Tell their own tale to him who wisely
heeds
The language which they speak ; and now
to me
The moonlight making pale the blooming
weeds,
The bright stars shining in the breathless sea,
Interpreted those scrolls of mortal mystery.

The Revolt of Islam

XII.

Such man has been, and such may yet
become !

Ay, wiser, greater, gentler, even than
they

Who on the fragments of yon shattered
dome

Have stamped the sign of power — I felt
the sway

Of the vast stream of ages bear away
My floating thoughts — my heart beat loud
and fast —

Even as a storm let loose beneath the
ray

Of the still moon, my spirit onward past
Beneath truth's steady beams upon its tumult
cast.

XIII.

It shall be thus no more ! too long, too
long,

Sons of the glorious dead, have ye lain
bound

The Revolt of Islam

In darkness and in ruin ! — Hope is strong,
Justice and Truth their winged child have
found.

Awake ! arise ! until the mighty sound
Of your career shall scatter in its gust
The thrones of the oppressor, and the
ground
Hide the last altar's unregarded dust,
Whose Idol has so long betrayed your impious
trust !

XIV.

It must be so — I will arise and waken
The multitude, and, like a sulphurous
hill

Which on a sudden from its snows has
shaken

The swoon of ages, it shall burst, and fill
The world with cleansing fire ; it must,
it will —

It may not be restrained ! — and who shall
stand

Amid the rocking earthquake steadfast
still,

The Revolt of Islam

But Laon? on high Freedom's desert land
A tower whose marble walls the leaguèd storms
withstand!

xv.

One summer night, in commune with the
hope
Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins gray
I watched, beneath the dark sky's starry
cope;
And ever, from that hour, upon me lay
The burden of this hope, and night or
day,
In vision or in dream, clove to my breast:
Among mankind, or when gone far away
To the lone shores and mountains, 'twas a
guest
Which followed where I fled, and watched
when I did rest.

xvi.

These hopes found words through which
my spirit sought
To weave a bondage of such sympathy

The Revolt of Islam

As might create some response to the thought
Which ruled me now — and as the vapours
lie
Bright in the outspread morning's radi-
ancy,
So were these thoughts invested with the light
Of language ; and all bosoms made reply
On which its lustre streamed, whene'er it
might
Through darkness wide and deep those tranced
spirits smite.

XVII.

Yes, many an eye with dizzy tears was dim,
And oft I thought to clasp my own
heart's brother,
When I could feel the listener's senses swim,
And hear his breath its own swift gaspings
smother
Even as my words evoked them — and
another,
And yet another, I did fondly deem,
Felt that we all were sons of one great
mother ;

The Revolt of Islam

And the cold truth such sad reverse did seem
As to awake in grief from some delightful
dream.

XVIII.

Yes, oft beside the ruined labyrinth
Which skirts the hoary caves of the green
deep
Did Laon and his friend, on one gray plinth,
Round whose worn base the wild waves
hiss and leap,
Resting at eve, a lofty converse keep:
And that this friend was false may now be said
Calmly — that he, like other men, could
weep
Tears which are lies, and could betray and
spread
Snares for that guileless heart which for his
own had bled.

XIX.

Then, had no great aim recompensed my
sorrow,
I must have sought dark respite from its
stress

The Revolt of Islam

In dreamless rest, in sleep that sees no
morrow —
For to tread life's dismaying wilderness
Without one smile to cheer, one voice to
bless,
Amid the snares and scoffs of humankind,
Is hard — but I betrayed it not, nor
less,
With love that scorned return, sought to
unbind
The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom
blind.

xx.

With deathless minds, which leave where
they have passed
A path of light, my soul communion
knew ;
Till from that glorious intercourse, at last,
As from a mine of magic store, I drew
Words which were weapons ; round my
heart there grew
The adamantine armour of their power,
And from my fancy wings of golden hue

The Revolt of Islam

Sprang forth — yet not alone from wisdom's
tower,
A minister of truth, these plumes young Laon
bore.

XXI.

An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes
Were lodestars of delight which drew me
home
When I might wander forth ; nor did I prize
Aught human thing beneath Heaven's
mighty dome
Beyond this child : so, when sad hours
were come,
And baffled hope like ice still clung to me,
Since kin were cold, and friends had now
become
Heartless and false, I turned from all to be,
Cythna, the only source of tears and smiles
to thee.

XXII.

What wert thou then? A child most in-
fantine,
Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age

The Revolt of Islam

In all but its sweet looks and mien divine :
Even then, methought, with the world's
tyrant rage
A patient warfare thy young heart did
wage,
When those soft eyes of scarcely conscious
thought
Some tale or thine own fancies would
engage
To overflow with tears, or converse fraught
With passion o'er their depths its fleeting light
had wrought.

XXIII.

She moved upon this earth a shape of
brightness,
A power that from its objects scarcely drew
One impulse of her being — in her lightness
Most like some radiant cloud of morning
dew
Which wanders through the waste air's
pathless blue
To nourish some far desert ; she did seem,

The Revolt of Islam

Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
Like the bright shade of some immortal
dream
Which walks, when tempest sleeps, the wave
of life's dark stream.

XXIV.

As mine own shadow was this child to me,
A second self, far dearer and more fair,
Which clothed in undissolving radiancy
All those steep paths which languor and
despair
Of human things had made so dark and
bare,
But which I trod alone — nor, till bereft
Of friends, and overcome by lonely care,
Knew I what solace for that loss was left,
Though by a bitter wound my trusting heart
was cleft.

XXV.

Once she was dear, now she was all I had
To love in human life — this playmate
sweet,

The Revolt of Islam

This child of twelve years old — so she was
made
My sole associate, and her willing feet
Wandered with mine where earth and
ocean meet,
Beyond the ærial mountains whose vast cells
The unreposing billows ever beat,
Through forests wide and old, and lawny
dells
Where boughs of incense droop over the
emerald wells.

XXVI.

And warm and light I felt her clasping hand
When twined in mine: she followed
where I went,
Through the lone paths of our immortal land.
It had no waste but some memorial lent
Which strung me to my toil — some mon-
ument
Vital with mind: then Cythna by my side,
Until the bright and beaming day were
spent,

The Revolt of Islam

Would rest, with looks entreating to abide,
Too earnest and too sweet ever to be denied.

XXVII.

And soon I could not have refused her —
thus,
For ever, day and night, we two were
ne'er
Parted, but when brief sleep divided us :
And, when the pauses of the lulling air
Of noon beside the sea had made a lair
For her soothed senses, in my arms she
slept,
And I kept watch over her slumbers
there,
While, as the shifting visions o'er her swept,
Amid her innocent rest by turns she smiled
and wept.

XXVIII.

And in the murmur of her dreams was
heard
Sometimes the name of Laon : — sud-
denly

The Revolt of Islam

She would arise, and, like the secret
bird
Whom sunset wakens, fill the shore and
sky
With her sweet accents — a wild melody !
Hymns which my soul had woven to Free-
dom, strong
The source of passion, whence they rose,
to be ;
Triumphant strains which, like a spirit's
tongue,
To the enchanted waves that child of glory
sung —

XXIX.

Her white arms lifted through the shadowy
stream
Of her loose hair — oh excellently great
Seemed to me then my purpose, the vast
theme
Of those impassioned songs, when Cythna
sate
Amid the calm which rapture doth create
After its tumult, her heart vibrating,



Cythna Singing.

" Her white arms lifted through the shadowy stream of her loose hair."



The Revolt of Islam

Her spirit o'er the ocean's floating state
From her deep eyes far wandering, on the
wing
Of visions that were mine, beyond its utmost
spring.

xxx.

For, before Cythna loved it, had my song
Peopled with thoughts the boundless uni-
verse,
A mighty congregation, which were strong,
Where'er they trod the darkness, to dis-
perse
The cloud of that unutterable curse
Which clings upon mankind:—all things
became
Slaves to my holy and heroic verse,
Earth, sea and sky, the planets, life and fame,
And fate, or whate'er else binds the world's
wondrous frame.

xxxI.

And this beloved child thus felt the sway
Of my conceptions, gathering like a cloud

The Revolt of Islam

The very wind on which it rolls away :
Hers too were all my thoughts ere yet,
endowed
With music and with light, their fountains
flowed
In poesy ; and her still and earnest face,
Pallid with feelings which intensely glowed
Within, was turned on mine with speechless
grace,
Watching the hopes which there her heart had
learned to trace.

XXXII.

In me communion with this purest being
Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise
In knowledge, which in hers mine own mind
seeing
Left in the human world few mysteries :
How without fear of evil or disguise
Was Cythna !—what a spirit strong and
mild,
Which death or pain or peril could de-
spise,

The Revolt of Islam .

Yet melt in tenderness ! what genius wild
Yet mighty was enclosed within one simple
child !

XXXIII.

New lore was this — old age, with its gray
hair,
And wrinkled legends of unworthy things,
And icy sneers, is nought : it cannot dare
To burst the chains which life for ever flings
On the entangled soul's aspiring wings,
So is it cold and cruel, and is made
The careless slave of that dark power
which brings
Evil, like blight, on man, who, still betrayed,
Laughs o'er the grave in which his living hopes
are laid.

XXXIV.

Nor are the strong and the severe to keep
The empire of the world : thus Cythna
taught
Even in the visions of her eloquent sleep,
Unconscious of the power through which
she wrought

The Revolt of Islam

The woof of such intelligible thought,
As from the tranquil strength which cradled
lay
In her smile-peopled rest, my spirit
sought
Why the deceiver and the slave has sway
O'er heralds so divine of truth's arising day.

xxxv.

Within that fairest form the female mind,
Untainted by the poison-clouds which
rest
On the dark world, a sacred home did find :
But else from the wide earth's maternal
breast
Victorious Evil, which had dispossessed
All native power, had those fair children
torn,
And made them slaves to soothe his vile
unrest,
And minister to lust its joys forlorn,
Till they had learned to breathe the atmos-
phere of scorn.

The Revolt of Islam

XXXVI.

This misery was but coldly felt till she
Became my only friend, who had endued
My purpose with a wider sympathy ;
Thus Cythna mourned with me the servitude
In which the half of humankind were
mewed,
Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of
slaves,
She mourned that grace and power were
thrown as food
To the hyæna lust, who among graves
Over his loathèd meal, laughing in agony,
raves.

XXXVII.

And I, still gazing on that glorious child,
Even as these thoughts flushed o'er
her : — “ Cythna sweet,
Well with the world art thou unreconciled ;
Never will peace and human nature
meet

The Revolt of Islam

Till free and equal man and woman
greet
Domestic peace; and, ere this power can
make
In human hearts its calm and holy seat,
This slavery must be broken " — as I spake,
From Cythna's eyes a light of exultation brake.

XXXVIII.

She replied earnestly : — " It shall be mine,
This task, — mine, Laon! — thou hast
much to gain;
Nor wilt thou at poor Cythna's pride repine,
If she should lead a happy female train
To meet thee over the rejoicing plain,
When myriads at thy call shall throng
around
The Golden City." — Then the child did
strain
My arm upon her tremulous heart, and
wound
Her own about my neck, till some reply she
found.

The Revolt of Islam

XXXIX.

I smiled, and spake not. — “Wherefore dost
thou smile

At what I say? Laon, I am not weak,
And, though my cheek might become pale
the while,

With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek,
Through their array of banded slaves, to
wreak

Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought
It was more hard to turn my unpractised
cheek

To scorn and shame, and this beloved spot
And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and mur-
mur not.

XL.

“Whence came I what I am? Thou, Laon,
knowest

How a young child should thus un-
daunted be;

Methinks it is a power which thou be-
stowest,

The Revolt of Islam

Through which I seek, by most resembling thee,
So to become most good and great and free ;
Yet, far beyond this Ocean's utmost roar,
In towers and huts are many like to me,
Who, could they see thine eyes, or feel such lore
As I have learnt from them, like me would
fear no more.

XLI.

“ Think'st thou that I shall speak unskilfully,
And none will heed me? I remember
now
How once a slave in tortures doomed to die
Was saved because in accents sweet and low
He sung a song his judge loved long ago,
As he was led to death. — All shall relent
Who hear me — tears, as mine have
flowed, shall flow,
Hearts beat as mine now beats, with such
intent
As renovates the world ; a will omnipotent !

The Revolt of Islam

XLII.

“ Yes, I will tread Pride’s golden palaces,
Through Penury’s roofless huts and
squalid cells
Will I descend, where’er in abjectness
Woman with some vile slave her tyrant
dwells,
There with the music of thine own sweet
spells
Will disenchant the captives, and will pour
For the despairing, from the crystal
wells
Of thy deep spirit, reason’s mighty lore,
And power shall then abound, and hope arise
once more.

XLIII.

“ Can man be free if woman be a slave?
Chain one who lives, and breathes this
boundless air,
To the corruption of a closèd grave!
Can they whose mates are beasts con-
demned to bear

The Revolt of Islam

Scorn heavier far than toil or anguish
dare
To trample their oppressors? in their home,
Among their babes, thou knowest a curse
would wear
The shape of woman — hoary Crime would
come
Behind, and Fraud rebuild religion's tottering
dome.

XLIV.

“ I am a child : — I would not yet depart.
When I go forth alone, bearing the lamp
Aloft which thou hast kindled in my heart,
Millions of slaves from many a dungeon
damp
Shall leap in joy, as the benumbing cramp
Of ages leaves their limbs — no ill may
harm
Thy Cythna ever — truth its radiant
stamp
Has fixed, as an invulnerable charm,
Upon her children's brow, dark Falsehood to
disarm.

The Revolt of Islam

XLV.

“Wait yet awhile for the appointed day —
Thou wilt depart, and I with tears shall
stand
Watching thy dim sail skirt the ocean gray ;
Amid the dwellers of this lonely land
I shall remain alone — and thy command
Shall then dissolve the world’s unquiet trance,
And, multitudinous as the desert sand
Borne on the storm, its millions shall advance,
Thronging round thee, the light of their deliverance.

XLVI.

“Then, like the forests of some pathless
mountain
Which from remotest glens two warring
winds
Involve in fire which not the loosened fountain
Of broadest floods might quench, shall all
the kinds

The Revolt of Islam

Of evil catch from our uniting minds
The spark which must consume them ; —
Cythna then
Will have cast off the impotence that
binds
Her childhood now, and through the paths
of men
Will pass, as the charmed bird that haunts the
serpent's den.

XLVII.

“ We part ! — O Laon, I must dare, nor
tremble,
To meet those looks no more ! — Oh,
heavy stroke !
Sweet brother of my soul ! can I dissemble
The agony of this thought ? ” — As thus
she spoke,
The gathered sobs her quivering accents
broke,
And in my arms she hid her beating breast.
I remained still for tears — sudden she
woke

The Revolt of Islam

As one awakes from sleep, and wildly prest
My bosom, her whole frame impetuously pos-
sest.

XLVIII.

“We part to meet again — but yon blue
waste,

Yon desert wide and deep, holds no recess
Within whose happy silence, thus embraced,
We might survive all ills in one caress :
Nor doth the grave — I fear 'tis passion-
less —

Nor yon cold vacant Heaven : — we meet
again

Within the minds of men, whose lips
shall bless

Our memory, and whose hopes its light
retain,

When these dissevered bones are trodden in
the plain.”

XLIX.

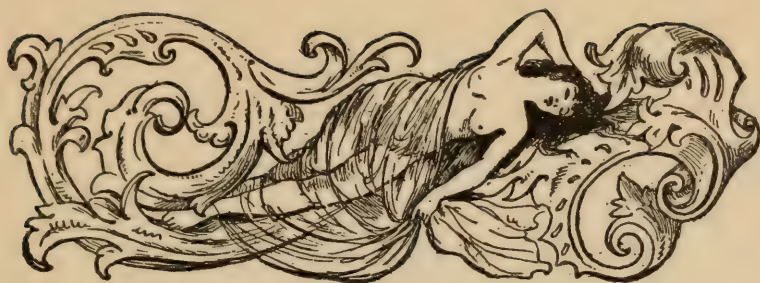
I could not speak, though she had ceased,
for now

The fountains of her feeling, swift and deep,

The Revolt of Islam

Seemed to suspend the tumult of their flow ;
So we arose, and by the starlight steep
Went homeward — neither did we speak
nor weep,
But, pale, were calm with passion — thus
subdued,
Like evening shades that o'er the moun-
tains creep,
We moved towards our home ; where, in
this mood,
Each from the other sought refuge in solitude.





Canto III.

I.



THAT thoughts had sway o'er
Cythna's lonely slumber
That night I know not ; but my
own did seem

As if they might ten thousand years out-
number

Of waking life, the visions of a dream
Which hid in one dim gulf the troubled
stream

Of mind ; a boundless chaos wild and vast,
Whose limits yet were never memory's
theme :

And I lay struggling as its whirlwinds past,
Sometimes for rapture sick, sometimes for pain
aghast.

The Revolt of Islam

II.

Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace
More time than might make gray the
infant world,
Rolled thus, a weary and tumultuous space :
When the third came, like mist on breezes
curled,
From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurled :
Methought, upon the threshold of a cave
I sate with Cythna ; drooping briony,
pearled
With dew from the wild streamlet's shattered
wave,
Hung, where we sate to taste the joys which
Nature gave.

III.

We lived a day as we were wont to live,
But Nature had a robe of glory on,
And the bright air o'er every shape did
weave
Intenser hues, so that the herbless stone,

The Revolt of Islam

The leafless bough among the leaves alone,
Had being clearer than its own could be, —
And Cythna's pure and radiant self was
shown,
In this strange vision, so divine to me
That, if I loved before, now love was agony.

IV.

Morn fled, noon came, evening, then night,
descended,
And we prolonged calm talk beneath the
sphere
Of the calm moon — when suddenly was
blended
With our repose a nameless sense of fear ;
And from the cave behind I seemed to hear
Sounds gathering upwards ! — accents in-
complete
And stifled shrieks, — and now, more
near and near,
A tumult and a rush of thronging feet
The cavern's secret depths beneath the earth
did beat.

The Revolt of Islam

v.

The scene was changed, and away, away,
away !

Through the air and over the sea we sped,
And Cythna in my sheltering bosom lay,
And the winds bore me — through the
darkness spread

Around, the gaping earth then vomited
Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which
hung

Upon my flight ; and ever, as we fled,
They plucked at Cythna — soon to me then
clung

A sense of actual things those monstrous
dreams among.

vi.

And I lay struggling in the impotence
Of sleep, while outward life had burst its
bound,
Though, still deluded, strove the tortured
sense

The Revolt of Islam

To its dire wanderings to adapt the sound
Which in the light of morn was poured
around

Our dwelling — breathless, pale, and una-
ware,

I rose, and all the cottage crowded found
With armèd men, whose glittering swords
were bare,

And whose degraded limbs the tyrant's garb
did wear.

VII.

And, ere with rapid lips and gathered brow

I could demand the cause, a feeble
shriek —

It was a feeble shriek, faint, far, and low —

Arrested me — my mien grew calm and
meek,

And, grasping a small knife, I went to
seek

That voice among the crowd — 'twas Cyth-
na's cry!

Beneath most calm resolve did agony
wreak

The Revolt of Islam

Its whirlwind rage : — so I past quietly,
Till I beheld where bound that dearest child
did lie.

VIII.

I started to behold her, for delight
And exultation, and a joyance free,
Solemn, serene, and lofty, filled the light
Of the calm smile with which she looked
on me :

So that I feared some brainless ecstasy,
Wrought from that bitter woe, had wildered
her —

“Farewell ! farewell !” she said, as I drew
nigh.

“At first my peace was marred by this
strange stir,
Now I am calm as truth — its chosen min-
ister.

IX.

“Look not so, Laon — say farewell in
hope,
These bloody men are but the slaves who
bear

The Revolt of Islam

Their mistress to her task — it was my
scope

The slavery where they drag me now to
share,

And among captives willing chains to
wear

Awhile — the rest thou knowest — return,
dear friend !

Let our first triumph trample the despair
Which would ensnare us now, for, in the
end,

In victory or in death our hopes and fears
must blend."

x.

These words had fallen on my unheeding
ear,

Whilst I had watched the motions of the
crew

With seeming careless glance ; not many
were

Around her, for their comrades just with-
drew

To guard some other victim — so I drew

The Revolt of Islam

My knife, and with one impulse, suddenly,
All unaware three of their number slew,
And grasped a fourth by the throat, and
with loud cry
My countrymen invoked to death or liberty!

XI.

What followed then I know not — for a
stroke
On my raised arm and naked head came
down,
Filling my eyes with blood. — When I
awoke,
I felt that they had bound me in my
swoon,
And up a rock which overhangs the town,
By the steep path, were bearing me: below
The plain was filled with slaughter, —
overthrown
The vineyards and the harvests, and the
glow
Of blazing roofs shone far o'er the white
ocean's flow.

The Revolt of Islam

XII.

Upon that rock a mighty column stood
Whose capital seemed sculptured in the
sky,
Which to the wanderers o'er the solitude
Of distant seas, from ages long gone by,
Had made a landmark ; o'er its height to
fly
Scarcely the cloud, the vulture, or the blast,
Has power — and, when the shades of
evening lie
On earth and ocean, its carved summits cast
The sunken daylight far through the aërial
waste.

XIII.

They bore me to a cavern in the hill
Beneath that column, and unbound me
there :
And one did strip me stark ; and one did fill
A vessel from the putrid pool ; one bare
A lighted torch, and four with friendless
care

The Revolt of Islam

Guided my steps the cavern-paths along.

Then up a steep and dark and narrow stair

We wound, until the torch's fiery tongue

Amid the gushing day beamless and pallid
hung.

xiv.

They raised me to the platform of the pile,

That column's dizzy height: the grate
of brass,

Through which they thrust me, open stood
the while,

As to its ponderous and suspended mass,

With chains which eat into the flesh, alas!

With brazen links, my naked limbs they
bound:

The grate, as they departed to repass,

With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound
Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom were
drowned.

xv.

The noon was calm and bright:—around
that column

The overhanging sky and circling sea

The Revolt of Islam

Spread forth, in silentness profound and
solemn,
The darkness of brief frenzy cast on me,
So that I knew not my own misery :
The islands and the mountains in the day
Like clouds reposed afar ; and I could see
The town among the woods below that lay,
And the dark rocks which bound the bright
and glassy bay.

XVI.

It was so calm that scarce the feathery weed
Sown by some eagle on the topmost stone
Swayed in the air :—so bright that noon
did breed
No shadow in the sky beside mine own —
Mine, and the shadow of my chain alone.
Below, the smoke of roofs involved in flame
Rested like night, all else was clearly shown
In that broad glare, — yet sound to me none
came,
But of the living blood that ran within my
frame.

The Revolt of Islam

XVII.

The peace of madness fled, and ah, too soon !
A ship was lying on the sunny main,
Its sails were flagging in the breathless
noon —
Its shadow lay beyond — that sight again
Waked with its presence in my tranced
brain
The stings of a known sorrow, keen and
cold :
I knew that ship bore Cythna o'er the plain
Of waters, to her blighting slavery sold,
And watched it with such thoughts as must
remain untold.

XVIII.

I watched, until the shades of evening
wrapped
Earth like an exhalation — then the bark
Moved, for that calm was by the sunset
snapt.
It moved a speck upon the ocean dark :

The Revolt of Islam

Soon the wan stars came forth, and I
could mark
Its path no more! I sought to close mine
eyes,
But, like the balls, their lids were stiff and
stark;
I would have risen, but ere that I could rise
My parchèd skin was split with piercing
agonies.

XIX.

I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to
sever
Its adamantine links, that I might die;
O Liberty! forgive the base endeavour,
Forgive me if, reserved for victory,
The Champion of thy faith e'er sought to
fly! —
That starry night, with its clear silence,
sent
Tameless resolve which laughed at misery
Into my soul — linkèd remembrance lent
To that such power, to me such a severe con-
tent.

The Revolt of Islam

xx.

To breathe, to be, to hope, or to despair
And die, I questioned not; nor, though
the sun,
Its shafts of agony kindling through the air,
Moved over me, nor though, in evening
dun,
Or when the stars their visible courses run,
Or morning, the wide universe was spread
In dreary calmness round me, did I shun
Its presence, nor seek refuge with the dead
From one faint hope whose flower a dropping
poison shed.

xxi.

Two days thus past — I neither raved nor
died —
Thirst raged within me, like a scorpion's
nest
Built in mine entrails; I had spurned aside
The water-vessel while despair possest
My thoughts, and now no drop re-
mained! The uprest

The Revolt of Islam

Of the third sun brought hunger — but the
crust

Which had been left was to my craving
breast

Fuel, not food. I chewed the bitter dust,
And bit my bloodless arm, and licked the
brazen rust.

XXII.

My brain began to fail when the fourth morn
Burst o'er the golden isles — a fearful
sleep,

Which through the caverns dreary and for-
lorn

Of the riven soul sent its foul dreams to
sweep

With whirlwind swiftness — a fall far and
deep —

A gulf, a void, a sense of senselessness —

These things dwelt in me, even as shad-
ows keep

Their watch in some dim charnel's loneli-
ness, —

A shoreless sea, a sky sunless and planetless !

The Revolt of Islam

XXIII.

The forms which peopled this terrific trance
I well remember — like a choir of devils,
Around me they involved a giddy dance ;
Legions seemed gathering from the misty
levels
Of ocean to supply those ceaseless revels,
Foul ceaseless shadows : — thought could
not divide
The actual world from these entangling
evils,
Which so bemocked themselves that I
descried
All shapes like mine own self hideously
multiplied.

XXIV.

The sense of day and night, of false and true,
Was dead within me. Yet two visions
burst
That darkness — one, as since that hour
I knew,
Was not a phantom of the realms accurst

The Revolt of Islam

Where then my spirit dwelt — but, of the
first,
I know not yet was it a dream or no.
But both, though not distincter, were
immersed
In hues which, when through memory's
waste they flow,
Make their divided streams more bright and
rapid now.

xxv.

Methought that grate was lifted, and the
seven
Who brought me thither four stiff corpses
bare,
And from the frieze to the four winds of
Heaven
Hung them on high by the entangled
hair;
Swarthy were three — the fourth was very
fair:
As they retired, the golden moon up-
sprung,
And eagerly, out in the giddy air

The Revolt of Islam

Leaning that I might eat, I stretched and
clung
Over the shapeless depth in which those
corpses hung.

XXVI.

A woman's shape, now lank and cold and
blue,
The dwelling of the many-coloured
worm,
Hung there; the white and hollow cheek
I drew
To my dry lips — What radiance did
inform
Those horny eyes? whose was that with-
ered form?
Alas, alas! it seemed that Cythna's ghost
Laughed in those looks, and that the flesh
was warm
Within my teeth! — A whirlwind keen as
frost
Then in its sinking gulfs my sickening spirit
tost.

The Revolt of Islam

XXVII.

Then seemed it that a tameless hurricane
Arose, and bore me in its dark career
Beyond the sun, beyond the stars that
wane
On the verge of formless space—it languished there,
And, dying, left a silence lone and drear,
More horrible than famine:—in the deep
The shape of an old man did then appear,
Stately and beautiful; that dreadful sleep
His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could
wake and weep.

XXVIII.

And, when the blinding tears had fallen,
I saw
That column and those corpses and the
moon,
And felt the poisonous tooth of hunger
gnaw
My vitals, I rejoiced, as if the boon

The Revolt of Islam

Of senseless death would be accorded
soon ; —
When from that stony gloom a voice
arose,
Solemn and sweet as when low winds
attune
The midnight pines ; the grate did then
unclose,
And on that reverend form the moonlight did
repose.

XXIX.

He struck my chains, and gently spake and
smiled ;
As they were loosened by that Hermit
old,
Mine eyes were of their madness half be-
guiled,
To answer those kind looks. — He did
enfold
His giant arms around me, to uphold
My wretched frame, my scorched limbs he
wound
In linen moist and balmy, and as cold

The Revolt of Islam

As dew to drooping leaves : the chain, with
 sound
Like earthquake, through the chasm of that
 steep stair did bound,

xxx.

As, lifting me, it fell ! — What next I heard
 Were billows leaping on the harbour-bar,
And the shrill sea-wind, whose breath idly
 stirred
My hair ; — I looked abroad, and saw
 a star
Shining beside a sail, and distant far
That mountain and its column, the known
 mark
Of those who in the wide deep wandering
 are,
So that I feared some Spirit fell and dark
In trance had lain me thus within a fiendish
 bark.

xxxI.

For now indeed over the salt sea-billow
 I sailed : yet dared not look upon the shape

The Revolt of Islam

Of him who ruled the helm, although the
pillow

For my light head was hollowed in his lap,
And my bare limbs his mantle did enwrap,
Fearing it was a fiend: at last, he bent

O'er me his aged face, as if to snap
Those dreadful thoughts the gentle grand-
sire bent,

And to my inmost soul his soothing looks he
sent.

XXXII.

A soft and healing potion to my lips

At intervals he raised — now looked on
high,

To mark if yet the starry giant dips

His zone in the dim sea — now cheeringly,

Though he said little, did he speak to me.

“It is a friend beside thee — take good
cheer,

Poor victim, thou art now at liberty !”

I joyed as those, a human tone to hear,

Who in cells deep and lone have languished
many a year.

The Revolt of Islam

XXXIII.

A dim and feeble joy, whose glimpses oft
Were quenched in a relapse of wildering
dreams,
Yet still methought we sailed, until aloft
The stars of night grew pallid, and the
beams
Of morn descended on the ocean streams,
And still that aged man, so grand and mild,
Tended me, even as some sick mother
seems
To hang in hope over a dying child,
Till in the azure East darkness again was piled.

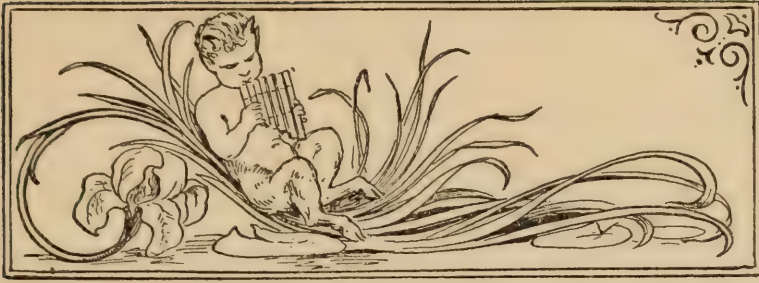
XXXIV.

And then the night-wind, steaming from the
shore,
Sent odours dying sweet across the sea,
And the swift boat the little waves which
bore
Were cut by its keen keel, though slant-
ingly ;

The Revolt of Islam

Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and
could see
The myrtle-blossoms starring the dim grove,
As past the pebbly beach the boat did
flee
On sidelong wing into a silent cove,
Where ebon pines a shade under the starlight
wove.





Canto IV.

I.



HE old man took the oars, and
soon the bark
Smote on the beach beside a
tower of stone ;

It was a crumbling heap whose portal dark
With blooming ivy-trails was overgrown ;
Upon whose floor the spangling sands
were strown,
And rarest sea-shells, which the eternal flood,
Slave to the mother of the months, had
thrown
Within the walls of that gray tower, which
stood
A changeling of man's art nursed amid Na-
ture's brood.

The Revolt of Islam

II.

When the old man his boat had anchored,
He wound me in his arms with tender
care,
And very few but kindly words he said,
And bore me through the tower adown a
stair,
Whose smooth descent some ceaseless
step to wear
For many a year had fallen. — We came at
last
To a small chamber which with mosses
rare
Was tapestried, where me his soft hands
placed
Upon a couch of grass and oak-leaves inter-
laced.

III.

The moon was darting through the lattices
Its yellow light, warm as the beams of
day —

So warm that, to admit the dewy breeze,

The Revolt of Islam

The old man opened them ; the moon-
light lay
Upon a lake whose waters wove their
play
Even to the threshold of that lonely home :
Within was seen in the dim wavering ray
The antique sculptured roof, and many a
tome
Whose lore had made that sage all that he had
become.

IV.

The rock-built barrier of the sea was past, —
And I was on the margin of a lake,
A lonely lake, amid the forests vast
And snowy mountains : — did my spirit
wake
From sleep as many-coloured as the snake
That girds eternity ? in life and truth
Might not my heart its cravings ever
slake ?
Was Cythna then a dream, and all my youth,
And all its hopes and fears, and all its joy and
ruth ?

The Revolt of Islam

V.

Thus madness came again, — a milder mad-
ness

Which darkened nought but time's un-
quiet flow

With supernatural shades of clinging sadness;

That gentle Hermit, in my helpless woe,

By my sick couch was busy to and fro,

Like a strong spirit ministrant of good :

When I was healed, he led me forth to
show

The wonders of his sylvan solitude,

And we together sate by that isle-fretted flood.

VI.

He knew his soothing words to weave with
skill

From all my madness told: like mine
own heart,

Of Cythna would he question me, until

That thrilling name had ceased to make
me start,

The Revolt of Islam

From his familiar lips — it was not art,
Of wisdom and of justice when he spoke —
When mid' soft looks of pity there would
 dart

A glance as keen as is the lightning's stroke
When it doth rive the knots of some ancestral
 oak.

VII.

Thus slowly from my brain the darkness
 rolled ;
My thoughts their due array did re-
 assume

Through the enchantments of that Hermit
 old ;

Then I bethought me of the glorious
 doom

Of those who sternly struggle to relume
The lamp of Hope o'er man's bewildered lot ;
And, sitting by the waters in the gloom
Of eve, to that friend's heart I told my
 thought —

That heart which had grown old, but had cor-
 rupted not.

The Revolt of Islam

VIII.

That hoary man had spent his livelong age
In converse with the dead who leave the
stamp
Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page,
When they are gone into the senseless damp
Of graves ; his spirit thus became a lamp
Of splendour, like to those on which it fed :
Through peopled haunts, the city and
the camp,
Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps
led,
And all the ways of men among mankind he
read.

IX.

But custom maketh blind and obdurate
The loftiest hearts : — he had beheld the
woe
In which mankind was bound, but deemed
that fate
Which made them abject would preserve
them so ;

The Revolt of Islam

And in such faith, some steadfast joy to
know,
He sought this cell : but, when fame went
abroad
That one in Argolis did undergo
Torture for liberty, and that the crowd
High truths from gifted lips had heard and
understood ;

x.

And that the multitude was gathering wide,
His spirit leaped within his aged frame,
In lonely peace he could no more abide,
But to the land on which the victor's flame
Had fed, my native land, the Hermit
came :
Each heart was there a shield, and every
tongue
Was as a sword, of truth — young Laon's
name
Rallied their secret hopes, though tyrants
sung
Hymns of triumphant joy our scattered tribes
among.

The Revolt of Islam

XI.

He came to the lone column on the rock,
And with his sweet and mighty eloquence
The hearts of those who watched it did
unlock,
And made them melt in tears of penitence.
They gave him entrance free to bear me
thence.
“Since this,” the old man said, “seven years
are spent
While slowly truth on thy benighted sense
Has crept; the hope which wildered it has
lent
Meanwhile to me the power of a sublime in-
tent.

XII.

“Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages
old,
From whatsoe’er my wakened thoughts cre-
ate
Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold,

The Revolt of Islam

Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen ; from shore to
shore
Doctrines of human power my words
have told,
They have been heard, and men aspire to
more
Than they have ever gained or ever lost of
yore.

XIII.

“In secret chambers parents read, and weep,
My writings to their babes, no longer
blind ;
And young men gather when their tyrants
sleep,
And vows of faith each to the other bind ;
And marriageable maidens, who have pined
With love till life seemed melting through
their look,
A warmer zeal, a nobler hope, now find ;
And every bosom thus is rapt and shook,
Like autumn’s myriad leaves in one swoln
mountain-brook.

The Revolt of Islam

XIV.

“The tyrants of the Golden City tremble
At voices which are heard about the
streets,
The ministers of fraud can scarce dissemble
The lies of their own heart, — but, when
one meets
Another at the shrine, he inly weets,
Though he says nothing, that the truth is
known;
Murderers are pale upon the judgment-
seats,
And gold grows vile even to the wealthy
crone,
And laughter fills the Fane, and curses shake
the Throne.

XV.

“Kind thoughts and mighty hopes and gentle
deeds
Abound, for fearless love, and the pure
law
Of mild equality and peace, succeeds

The Revolt of Islam

To faiths which long have held the world
in awe,
Bloody and false and cold :—as whirl-
pools draw
All wrecks of ocean to their chasm, the
sway
Of thy strong genius, Laon, which fore-
saw
This hope, compels all spirits to obey
Which round thy secret strength now throng
in wide array.

XVI.

“ For I have been thy passive instrument ” —
(As thus the old man spake, his counte-
nance
Gleamed on me like a spirit’s) — “ Thou
hast lent
To me, to all, the power to advance
Towards this unforeseen deliverance
From our ancestral chains — ay, thou didst
rear
That lamp of hope on high which time
nor chance

The Revolt of Islam

Nor change may not extinguish, and my
share
Of good was o'er the world its gathered beams
to bear.

XVII.

“But I, alas ! am both unknown and old,
And, though the woof of wisdom I know
well
To dye in hues of language, I am cold
In seeming, and the hopes which inly
dwell
My manners note that I did long repel ;
But Laon's name to the tumultuous throng
Were like the star whose beams the
waves compel,
And tempests, and his soul-subduing tongue
Were as a lance to quell the mailed crest of
wrong.

XVIII.

“Perchance blood need not flow, if thou at
length
Wouldst rise, perchance the very slaves
would spare

The Revolt of Islam

Their brethren and themselves ; great is the
strength

Of words — for lately did a maiden fair,
Who from her childhood has been taught
to bear

The tyrant's heaviest yoke, arise, and make
Her sex the law of truth and freedom
hear,

And with these quiet words — ‘ For thine
own sake,

I prithee spare me ’ — did with ruth so take

XIX.

“ All hearts that even the torturer, who had
bound

Her meek calm frame, ere it was yet im-
paled,

Loosened her, weeping then ; nor could be
found

One human hand to harm her — unassailed
Therefore she walks through the great
City, veiled

In virtue's adamantine eloquence,

The Revolt of Islam

'Gainst scorn and death and pain thus
trebly mailed,
And blending, in the smiles of that defence,
The serpent and the dove, wisdom and innocence.

XX.

"The wild-eyed women throng around her
path :
From their luxurious dungeons, from the
dust
Of meaner thralls, from the oppressor's wrath,
Or the caresses of his sated lust,
They congregate : in her they put their
trust ;
The tyrants send their armèd slaves to quell
Her power ; they, even like a thunder-
gust
Caught by some forest, bend beneath the spell
Of that young maiden's speech, and to their
chiefs rebel.

XXI.

"Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
To woman, outraged and polluted long ;

The Revolt of Islam

Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach
For those fair hands now free, while armèd
wrong
Trembles before her look, though it be
strong ;
Thousands thus dwell beside her, virgins
bright,
And matrons with their babes, a stately
throng!
Lovers renew the vows which they did
plight
In early faith, and hearts long parted now
unite.

XXII.

“ And homeless orphans find a home near her,
And those poor victims of the proud, no
less,
Fair wrecks, on whom the smiling world,
with stir,
Thrusts the redemption of its wicked-
ness : —
In squalid huts and in its palaces
Sits Lust alone, while o’er the land is borne

The Revolt of Islam

Her voice, whose awful sweetness doth
 repress
All evil, and her foes relenting turn,
And cast the vote of love in hope's abandoned
 urn.

XXIII.

“ So, in the populous City, a young maiden
 Has baffled Havoc of the prey which he
Marks as his own whene'er, with chains o'er-
 laden,
Men make them arms to hurl down
 tyranny, —
False arbiter between the bound and free ;
And o'er the land, in hamlets and in towns,
 The multitudes collect tumultuously,
And throng in arms ; but tyranny disowns
Their claim, and gathers strength around its
 trembling thrones.

XXIV.

“ Blood soon, although unwillingly, to shed
 The free cannot forbear — the Queen of
 Slaves,

The Revolt of Islam

The hoodwinked Angel of the blind and
dead,

Custom, with iron mace points to the
graves

Where her own standard desolately waves
Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings.

Many yet stand in her array — 'she paves
Her path with human hearts,' and o'er it
flings

The wildering gloom of her immeasurable
wings.

xxv.

"There is a plain beneath the City's wall,
Bounded by misty mountains wide and
vast,

Millions there lift at Freedom's thrilling call
Ten thousand standards wide, they load
the blast

Which bears one sound of many voices
past,

And startles on his throne their sceptred
foe : —

He sits amid his idle pomp aghast,

The Revolt of Islam

And that his power hath passed away doth
know —

Why pause the victor swords to seal his over-
throw?

XXVI.

“The tyrant’s guards resistance yet maintain :
Fearless and fierce and hard as beasts of
blood,

They stand a speck amid the peopled plain ;
Carnage and ruin have been made their
food

From infancy — ill has become their good,
And for its hateful sake their will has wove
The chains which eat their hearts — the
multitude,

Surrounding them, with words of human love
Seek from their own decay their stubborn
minds to move.

XXVII.

“Over the land is felt a sudden pause,
As night and day, those ruthless bands
around,

The Revolt of Islam

The watch of love is kept — a trance which
 awes

The thoughts of men with hope — as,
 when the sound

Of whirlwind whose fierce blasts the
 waves and clouds confound

Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear

Feels silence sink upon his heart — thus
 bound,

The conquerors pause, and oh, may free-
 men ne'er

Clasp the relentless knees of Dread the mur-
 derer!

XXVIII

“If blood be shed, 'tis but a change and
 choice

Of bonds — from slavery to cowardice

A wretched fall! — Uplift thy charmèd
 voice!

Pour on those evil men the love that
 lies

Hovering within those spirit-soothing
 eyes!

The Revolt of Islam

Arise, my friend, farewell!" — As thus he
spake,
From the green earth lightly I did
arise,
As one out of dim dreams that doth awake,
And looked upon the depth of that reposing
lake.

XXIX.

I saw my countenance reflected there; —
And then my youth fell on me like a
wind
Descending on still waters — my thin hair
Was prematurely gray, my face was lined
With channels, such as suffering leaves
behind,
Not age; my brow was pale, but in my
cheek
And lips a flush of gnawing fire did
find
Their food and dwelling; though mine eyes
might speak
A subtle mind and strong within a frame thus
weak.

The Revolt of Islam

xxx.

And though their lustre now was spent and
faded,

Yet in my hollow looks and withered mien
The likeness of a shape for which was
braided

The brightest woof of genius still was
seen —

One who, methought, had gone from the
world's scene,

And left it vacant — 'twas her lover's face —

It might resemble her — it once had been
The mirror of her thoughts, and still the
grace

Which her mind's shadow cast left there a
lingering trace.

xxxi.

What then was I? She slumbered with the
dead.

Glory and joy and peace had come and
gone.

The Revolt of Islam

Doth the cloud perish when the beams are
 fled
Which steeped its skirts in gold? or, dark
 and lone,
Doth it not through the paths of night,
 unknown,
On outspread wings of its own wind up-
 borne,
Pour rain upon the earth? The stars are
 shown
When the cold moon sharpens her silver
 horn
Under the sea, and make the wide night not
 forlorn.

xxxii.

Strengthened in heart, yet sad, that aged
 man
I left with interchange of looks and
 tears
And lingering speech, and to the Camp
 began
My way. O'er many a mountain-chain
 which rears

The Revolt of Islam

Its hundred crests aloft, my spirit bears
My frame ; o'er many a dale and many a
moor,

And gaily now meseems serene earth
wears

The blosmy spring's star-bright investiture,
A vision which aught sad from sadness might
allure.

XXXIII.

My powers revived within me, and I went,
As one whom winds waft o'er the bend-
ing grass,

Through many a vale of that broad conti-
nent.

At night when I reposed, fair dreams did
pass

Before my pillow ; my own Cythna was,
Not like a child of death, among them ever ;

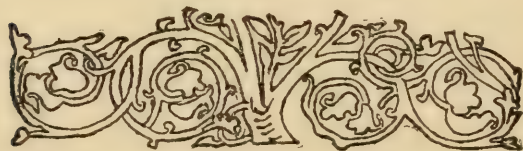
When I arose from rest, a woful mass
That gentlest sleep seemed from my life to
sever,

As if the light of youth were not withdrawn for
ever.

The Revolt of Islam

XXXIV.

Aye as I went, that maiden who had reared
The torch of Truth afar, of whose high
deeds
The Hermit in his pilgrimage had heard,
Haunted my thoughts. Ah, Hope its
sickness feeds
With whatsoe'er it finds, or flowers or
weeds! —
Could she be Cythna? Was that corpse
a shade
Such as self-torturing thought from mad-
ness breeds?
Why was this hope not torture? Yet it
made
A light around my steps which would not ever
fade.





Canto V.

I.



VER the utmost hill at length
I sped,
A snowy steep : — the moon was
hanging low
Over the Asian mountains, and, outspread
The plain, the City, and the Camp,
below,
Skirted the midnight ocean's glimmering
flow ;
The City's moonlit spires and myriad lamps
Like stars in a sublunar sky did glow,
And fires blazed far amid the scattered
camps,
Like springs of flame which burst where'er
swift Earthquake stamps.

The Revolt of Islam

II.

All slept but those in watchful arms who
stood,
And those who sate tending the beacon's
light,
And the few sounds from that vast multi-
tude
Made silence more profound. — Oh, what
a might
Of human thought was cradled in that
night!
How many hearts impenetrably veiled
Beat underneath its shade, what secret fight
Evil and good, in woven passions mailed,
Waged through that silent throng, — a war
that never failed!

III.

And now the Power of Good held victory,
So, through the labyrinth of many a tent,
Among the silent millions who did lie
In innocent sleep, exultingly I went;

The Revolt of Islam

The moon had left Heaven desert now,
but, lent
From eastern morn, the first faint lustre
showed
An armèd youth — over his spear he
bent
His downward face. — “A friend !” I cried
aloud,
And quickly common hopes made freemen
understood.

IV.

I sate beside him while the morning
beam
Crept slowly over Heaven, and talked
with him
Of those immortal hopes, a glorious theme !
Which led us forth, until the stars grew
dim :
And all the while methought his voice
did swim
As if it drownèd in remembrance were
Of thoughts which make the moist eyes
overbrim :

The Revolt of Islam

At last, when daylight 'gan to fill the air,
He looked on me, and cried in wonder,
"Thou art here!"

v.

Then, suddenly, I knew it was the youth
In whom its earliest hopes my spirit
found;
But envious tongues had stained his spotless
truth,
And thoughtless pride his love in silence
bound,
And shame and sorrow mine in toils had
wound,
Whilst he was innocent, and I deluded;
The truth now came upon me, on the
ground
Tears of repenting joy, which fast intruded,
Fell fast, and o'er its peace our mingling spirits
brooded.

vi.

Thus while with rapid lips and earnest eyes
We talked, a sound of sweeping conflict,
spread

The Revolt of Islam

As from the earth, did suddenly arise ;
From every tent, roused by that clamour
dread,
Our bands outsprung, and seized their
arms — we sped
Towards the sound : our tribes were gather-
ing far.
Those sanguine slaves, amid ten thousand
dead
Stabbed in their sleep, trampled in treacher-
ous war
The gentle hearts whose power their lives had
sought to spare.

VII.

Like rabid snakes that sting some gentle
child
Who brings them food when winter false
and fair
Allures them forth with its cold smiles, so
wild
They rage among the camp ; — they
overbear

The Revolt of Islam

The patriot host — confusion, then despair
Descends like night — when “ Laon ! ” one
did cry :

Like a bright ghost from Heaven, that
shout did scare
The slaves, and, widening through the
vaulted sky,
Seemed sent from Earth to Heaven in sign of
victory.

VIII.

In sudden panic those false murderers fled,
Like insect tribes before the northern
gale :

But, swifter still, our hosts encompassèd
Their shattered ranks, and in a craggy vale,
Where even their fierce despair might
nought avail,

Hemmed them around ! — And then re-
venge and fear

Made the high virtue of the patriots fail :
One pointed on his foe the mortal spear —
I rushed before its point, and cried “ Forbear,
forbear ! ”



Laon Saving the Foe.

"One pointed on his foe the mortal spear ;
I rushed before its point, and cried
'Forbear ; Forbear.'"



The Revolt of Islam

IX.

The spear transfixed my arm that was up-
lifted

In swift expostulation, and the blood
Gushed round its point: I smiled, and —

“ O thou gifted

With eloquence which shall not be with-
stood,

Flow thus ! ” I cried in joy, “ thou vital
flood,

Until my heart be dry, ere thus the cause

For which thou wert aught worthy be
subdued ! —

Ah ! ye are pale, — ye weep, — your pas-
sions pause, —

’Tis well ! ye feel the truth of love’s benignant
laws.

X.

“ Soldiers, our brethren and our friends are
slain :

Ye murdered them, I think, as they did
sleep !

The Revolt of Islam

Alas ! what have ye done? The slightest
pain
Which ye might suffer there were eyes to
weep,
But ye have quenched them — there were
smiles to steep
Your hearts in balm, but they are lost in
woe ;
And those whom love did set his watch
to keep
Around your tents, truth's freedom to be-
stow,
Ye stabbed as they did sleep — but they for-
give ye now.

XI.

“ Oh, wherefore should ill ever flow from
ill,
And pain still keener pain for ever
breed?
We all are brethren — even the slaves who
kill
For hire are men ; and to avenge misdeed
On the misdoer doth but Misery feed

The Revolt of Islam

With her own broken heart! O Earth,
O Heaven!

And thou, dread Nature, which to every
deed,
And all that lives or is, to be hath given,
Even as to thee have these done ill, and are
forgiven!

XII.

“Join then your hands and hearts, and let
the past

Be as a grave, which gives not up its
dead,

To evil thoughts.” — A film then overcast
My sense with dimness, for the wound,
which bled

Freshly, swift shadows o’er mine eyes had
shed.

When I awoke, I lay mid friends and foes,
And earnest countenances on me shed

The light of questioning looks, whilst one
did close

My wound with balmiest herbs, and soothed
me to repose.

The Revolt of Islam

XIII.

And one, whose spear had pierced me,
 leaned beside,
 With quivering lips and humid eyes;—
 and all
Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide
 Gone forth, whom now strange meeting
 did befall
 In a strange land round one whom they
 might call
Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay
 Of peril, which had saved them from the
 thrall
Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast
 array
Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that
 day.

XIV.

Lifting the thunder of their acclamation
 Towards the City, then the multitude,
And I among them, went in joy,—a na-
 tion

The Revolt of Islam

Made free by love, a mighty brotherhood
Linked by a jealous interchange of good ;
A glorious pageant, more magnificent
Than kingly slaves arrayed in gold and
blood,
When they return from carnage, and are
sent
In triumph bright beneath the populous battle-
ment.

xv.

Afar, the city-walls were thronged on high,
And myriads on each giddy turret clung,
And to each spire far lessening in the sky
Bright pennons on the idle winds were
hung ;
As we approached, a shout of joyance
sprung
At once from all the crowd, as if the vast
And peopled Earth its boundless skies
among
The sudden clamour of delight had cast,
When from before its face some general
wreck had past.

The Revolt of Islam

XVI.

Our armies through the City's hundred gates
Were poured, like brooks which to the
rocky lair
Of some deep lake, whose silence them
awaits,
Throng from the mountains when the
storms are there :
And, as we passed through the calm
sunny air,
A thousand flower-inwoven crowns were shed,
The token flowers of truth and freedom
fair,
And fairest hands bound them on many
a head,
Those angels of love's heaven that over all
was spread.

XVII.

I trod as one tranced in some rapturous
vision :
Those bloody bands so lately reconciled
Were, ever as they went, by the contrition

The Revolt of Islam

Of anger turned to love, from ill beguiled,
And every one on them more gently
smiled

Because they had done evil : — the sweet awe
Of such mild looks made their own hearts
grow mild,

And did with soft attraction ever draw
Their spirits to the love of freedom's equal law.

XVIII.

And they and all in one loud symphony
My name with Liberty commingling lifted,
“ The friend and the preserver of the free !

The parent of this joy ! ” and fair eyes,
gifted

With feelings caught from one who had
uplifted

The light of a great spirit, round me shone ;
And all the shapes of this grand scenery
shifted

Like restless clouds before the steadfast
sun, —

Where was that Maid ? I asked, but it was
known of none.

The Revolt of Islam

XIX.

Laone was the name her love had chosen,
For she was nameless, and her birth none
knew :
Where was Laone now ? — The words were
frozen
Within my lips with fear ; but to subdue
Such dreadful hope to my great task was
due,
And when at length one brought reply that
she
To-morrow would appear, I then withdrew
To judge what need for that great throng
might be,
For now the stars came thick over the twilight
sea.

XX.

Yet need was none for rest or food to care,
Even though that multitude was passing
great,
Since each one for the other did prepare
All kindly succour — Therefore to the gate

The Revolt of Islam

Of the Imperial House, now desolate,
I passed, and there was found aghast, alone,
The fallen Tyrant. Silently he sate
Upon the footstool of his throne,
Which, starred with sunny gems, in its own
lustre shone.

XXI.

Alone, but for one child who led before him
A graceful dance: the only living thing,
Of all the crowd which thither to adore him
Flocked yesterday, who solace sought to
bring
In his abandonment! — She knew the King
Had praised her dance of yore; and now
she wove
Its circles, aye weeping and murmuring,
Mid her sad task of unregarded love,
That to no smiles it might his speechless sad-
ness move.

XXII.

She fled to him, and wildly clasped his feet,
When human steps were heard: — he
moved nor spoke,

The Revolt of Islam

Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks
to meet
The gaze of strangers — our loud entrance
woke
The echoes of the hall, which circling
broke
The calm of its recesses, — like a tomb,
Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke
Of footfalls answered, and the twilight's
gloom
Lay like a charnel's mist within the radiant
dome.

XXIII.

The little child stood up when we came nigh ;
Her lips and cheeks seemed very pale and
wan,
But on her forehead and within her eye
Lay beauty which makes hearts that feed
thereon
Sick with excess of sweetness ; on the
throne
She leaned : the King, with gathered brow
and lips,

The Revolt of Islam

Wreathed by long scorn, did inly sneer
and frown,
With hue like that when some great painter
dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and
eclipse.

XXIV.

She stood beside him like a rainbow braided
Within some storm when scarce its shadows vast
From the blue paths of the swift sun have
faded ;
A sweet and solemn smile, like Cythna's,
cast
One moment's light, which made my heart
beat fast,
O'er that child's parted lips — a gleam of
bliss,
A shade of vanished days, — as the tears
past
Which wrapped it, even as with a father's kiss
I pressed those softest eyes in trembling tenderness.

The Revolt of Islam

XXV.

The sceptred wretch then from that solitude
I drew, and, of his change compassionate,
With words of sadness soothed his rugged
mood.

But he, while pride and fear held deep
debate,

With sullen guile of ill-dissembled hate
Glared on me as a toothless snake might
glare :

Pity, not scorn, I felt, though desolate
The desolater now, and unaware
The curses which he mocked had caught him
by the hair.

XXVI.

I led him forth from that which now might
seem

A gorgeous grave : through portals sculp-
tured deep

With imagery beautiful as dream

We went, and left the shades which tend
on sleep

The Revolt of Islam

Over its unregarded gold to keep
Their silent watch. — The child trod faint-
ingly,

And, as she went, the tears which she did
weep

Glanced in the starlight; wildered seemèd she,
And, when I spake, for sobs she could not
answer me.

XXVII.

At last the tyrant cried, “ She hungers, slave,
Stab her, or give her bread ! ” — It was
a tone

Such as sick fancies in a new-made grave
Might hear. I trembled, for the truth
was known :

He with this child had thus been left alone,
And neither had gone forth for food, —
but he,

In mingled pride and awe, cowered near
his throne,

And she, a nursling of captivity,
Knew nought beyond those walls, nor what
such change might be.

The Revolt of Islam

XXVIII.

And he was troubled at a charm withdrawn
Thus suddenly; that sceptres ruled no
more —
That even from gold the dreadful strength
was gone
Which once made all things subject to its
power —
Such wonder seized him as if hour by hour
The past had come again; and the swift fall
Of one so great and terrible of yore
To desolateness in the hearts of all
Like wonder stirred who saw such awful
change befall.

XXIX.

A mighty crowd, such as the wide land
pours
Once in a thousand years, now gathered
round
The fallen tyrant; — like the rush of showers
Of hail in spring, pattering along the
ground,

The Revolt of Islam

Their many footsteps fell — else came no
 sound
From the wide multitude ; that lonely man
 Then knew the burden of his change,
 and found,
Concealing in the dust his visage wan,
Refuge from the keen looks which through his
 bosom ran.

xxx.

And he was faint withal : I sate beside him
 Upon the earth, and took that child so
 fair
From his weak arms, that ill might none
 betide him
Or her ; — when food was brought to
 them, her share
To his averted lips the child did bear,
But, when she saw he had enough, she ate,
And wept the while ; — the lonely man's
 despair
Hunger then overcame, and, of his state
Forgetful, on the dust as in a trance he
 sate.

The Revolt of Islam

XXXI.

Slowly the silence of the multitudes
Passed, as when far is heard in some lone
dell
The gathering of a wind among the woods —
“And he is fallen!” they cry; “he who
did dwell
Like famine or the plague, or aught more
fell,
Among our homes, is fallen! the murderer
Who slaked his thirsting soul, as from
a well
Of blood and tears, with ruin! he is
here!
Sunk in a gulf of scorn from which none may
him rear!”

XXXII.

Then was heard — “He who judged, let
him be brought
To judgment! Blood for blood cries
from the soil

The Revolt of Islam

On which his crimes have deep pollution
wrought !

Shall Othman only unavenged despoil ?

Shall they who by the stress of grinding toil
Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries
Perish for crime, while his foul blood
may boil

Or creep within his veins at will ? — Arise,
And to high justice make her chosen sacrifice.”

XXXIII.

“What do ye seek ? what fear ye,” then
I cried,

Suddenly starting forth, “that ye should
shed

The blood of Othman ? — if your hearts are
tried

In the true love of freedom, cease to dread
This one poor lonely man — beneath
Heaven spread

In purest light above us all, through earth,
Maternal earth, who doth her sweet smiles
shed

The Revolt of Islam

For all, let him go free ; until the worth
Of human nature win from these a second
birth.

xxxiv.

“ What call ye *justice* ? Is there one who ne’er
In secret thought has wished another’s
ill ? —

Are ye all pure ? Let those stand forth who
hear

And tremble not. Shall they insult and
kill,

If such they be ? their mild eyes can they
fill

With the false anger of the hypocrite ?

Alas such were not pure, — the chastened
will

Of virtue sees that justice is the light
Of love, and not revenge and terror and
despite.”

xxxv.

The murmur of the people, slowly dying,
Paused as I spake, then those who near
me were

The Revolt of Islam

Cast gentle looks where the lone man was
 lying
 Shrouding his head, which now that infant
 fair
 Clasped on her lap in silence ; — through
 the air
Sobs were then heard, and many kissed my
 feet
 In pity's madness, and to the despair
 Of him whom late they cursed a solace sweet
His very victims brought — soft looks and
 speeches meet.

XXXVI.

Then to a home for his repose assigned,
 Accompanied by the still throng, he went
In silence, where, to soothe his rankling mind,
 Some likeness of his ancient state was lent ;
 And, if his heart could have been innocent
As those who pardoned him, he might have
 ended
 His days in peace ; but his straight lips
 were bent,

The Revolt of Islam

Men said, into a smile which guile portended,
A sight with which that childlike hope with
fear was blended.

XXXVII.

'Twas midnight now, the eve of that great
day
Whereon the many nations at whose call
The chains of earth like mist melted away
Decreed to hold a sacred Festival,
A rite to attest the equality of all
Who live. So to their homes, to dream or
wake,
All went. The sleepless silence did recall
Laone to my thoughts, with hopes that make
The flood recede from which their thirst they
seek to slake.

XXXVIII.

The dawn flowed forth, and from its purple
fountains
I drank those hopes which make the
spirit quail,

The Revolt of Islam

As to the plain between the misty mountains
And the great City, with a countenance
pale,

I went : — it was a sight which might avail
To make men weep exulting tears, for whom
Now first from human power the rever-
ent veil

Was torn, to see Earth from her general
womb

Pour forth her swarming sons to a fraternal
doom ;

XXXIX.

To see far glancing in the misty morning
The signs of that innumerable host,
To hear one sound of many made, the warn-
ing

Of Earth to Heaven from its free chil-
dren tost ;

While the eternal hills, and the sea lost
In wavering light, and, starring the blue sky,
The city's myriad spires of gold, almost
With human joy made mute society —
Its witnesses with men who must hereafter be.

The Revolt of Islam

XL.

To see, like some vast island from the ocean,
The Altar of the Federation rear
Its pile i' the midst,—a work which the
devotion
Of millions in one night created there,
Sudden as when the moonrise makes appear
Strange clouds in the east ; a marble pyramid
Distinct with steps : that mighty shape did
wear
The light of genius ; its still shadow hid
Far ships : to know its height the morning
mists forbid !

XLI.

To hear the restless multitudes for ever
Around the base of that great Altar flow,
As on some mountain-islet burst and shiver
Atlantic waves ; and solemnly and slow,
As the wind bore that tumult to and fro,
To feel the dreamlike music, which did swim
Like beams through floating clouds on
waves below,

The Revolt of Islam

Falling in pauses from that Altar dim,
As silver-sounding tongues breathed an aërial
hymn.

XLII.

To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
Lethæan joy ! so that all those assembled
Cast off their memories of the past out-
worn ;
Two only bosoms with their own life
trembled,
And mine was one, — and we had both
dissembled ;
So with a beating heart I went, and one
Who, having much, covets yet more, re-
sembled, —
A lost and dear possession, which not
won,
He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday
sun.

XLIII.

To the great Pyramid I came : its stair
With female choirs was thronged, the
loveliest

The Revolt of Islam

Among the free, grouped with its sculptures
rare ;

As I approached, the morning's golden
mist,

Which now the wonder-stricken breezes
kist

With their cold lips, fled, and the summit
shone

Like Athos seen from Samothracia, drest
In earliest light, by vintagers, and one
Sate there, a female Shape upon an ivory
throne :

XLIV.

A Form most like the imagined habitant
Of silver exhalations sprung from dawn,
By winds which feed on sunrise woven, to
enchant

The faiths of men : all mortal eyes were
drawn —

As famished mariners, through strange
seas gone,

Gaze on a burning watch-tower — by the light
Of those divinest lineaments. Alone

The Revolt of Islam

With thoughts which none could share, from
that fair sight
I turned in sickness, for a veil shrouded her
countenance bright.

XLV.

And neither did I hear the acclamations
Which, from brief silence bursting, filled
the air
With her strange name and mine, from all
the nations
Which we, they said, in strength had
gathered there
From the sleep of bondage; nor the
vision fair
Of that bright pageantry beheld, — but
blind
And silent as a breathing corpse did
fare,
Leaning upon my friend, till, like a
wind
To fevered cheeks, a voice flowed o'er my
troubled mind.

The Revolt of Islam

XLVI.

Like music of some minstrel heavenly-
gifted
To one whom fiends enthrall, this voice
to me ;
Scarce did I wish her veil to be uplifted,
I was so calm and joyous. — I could
see
The platform where we stood, the statues
three
Which kept their marble watch on that high
shrine,
The multitudes, the mountains, and the
sea ;
As, when eclipse hath passed, things sudden
shine
To men's astonished eyes most clear and crys-
talline.

XLVII.

At first Laone spoke most tremulously :
But soon her voice the calmness which it
shed

The Revolt of Islam

Gathered, and — “Thou art whom I sought
to see,

And thou art our first votary here,” she
said.

“I had a dear friend once, but he is dead!—
And, of all those on the wide earth who
breathe,

Thou dost resemble him alone — I spread
This veil between us two, that thou beneath
Shouldst image one who may have been long
lost in death.

XLVIII.

“For this wilt thou not henceforth pardon me?
Yes, but those joys which silence well
requite

Forbid reply ;— why men have chosen me
To be the Priestess of this holiest rite
I scarcely know, but that the floods of light
Which flow over the world have borne me
hither

To meet thee, long most dear ; and now
unite

The Revolt of Islam

Thine hand with mine, and may all comfort
wither
From both the hearts whose pulse in joy now
beat together,

XLIX.

“If our own will as others’ law we bind,
If the foul worship trampled here we fear,
If as ourselves we cease to love our kind!”—
She paused, and pointed upwards—sculptured there
Three shapes around her ivory throne
appear ;
One was a Giant, like a child asleep
On a loose rock, whose grasp crushed, as
it were
In dream, sceptres and crowns ; and one
did keep
Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or
weep ;

L.

A Woman sitting on the sculptured disk
Of the broad earth, and feeding from one
breast

The Revolt of Islam

A human babe and a young basilisk ;
Her looks were sweet as Heaven's when
loveliest
In autumn eves. The third Image was
drest
In white wings swift as clouds in winter skies ;
Beneath his feet, 'mongst ghastliest forms,
represt
Lay Faith, an obscene worm, who sought to
rise,
While calmly on the Sun he turned his dia-
mond eyes.

LI.

Beside that Image then I sate, while she
Stood mid the throngs which ever ebbed
and flowed,
Like light amid the shadows of the sea
Cast from one cloudless star, and on the
crowd
That touch which none who feels forgets
bestowed ;
And whilst the sun returned the steadfast
gaze

The Revolt of Islam

Of the great Image, as o'er Heaven it
glode,
That rite had place ; it ceased when sunset's
blaze
Burned o'er the isles. All stood in joy and
deep amaze,

When in the silence of all spirits there
Laone's voice was felt, and through the air
Her thrilling gestures spoke, most eloquently
fair.

I

"Calm art thou as yon sunset! swift and
strong
As new-fledged eagles, beautiful and young,
That float among the blinding beams of
morning :
And underneath thy feet writhe Faith and
Folly,
Custom and Hell and mortal Melan-
choly —
Hark ! the Earth starts to hear the mighty
warning

The Revolt of Islam

Of thy voice sublime and holy ;
Its free spirits here assembled,
 See thee, feel thee, know thee now,—
To thy voice their hearts have trembled,
 Like ten thousand clouds which flow
With one wide wind as it flies !
Wisdom ! thy irresistible children rise
To hail thee ; and the elements they chain,
And their own will, to swell the glory of thy
train.

2

“O Spirit vast and deep as Night and
Heaven !
Mother and soul of all to which is given
The light of life, the loveliness of being,
Lo ! thou dost reascend the human heart,
Thy throne of power, almighty, as thou
wert
In dreams of Poets old grown pale by seeing
The shade of thee :—now millions
start
To feel thy lightnings through them
burning :

The Revolt of Islam

Nature, or God, or Love, or Pleasure,
Or Sympathy, the sad tears turning
To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure,
Descends amidst us ; — Scorn and Hate,
Revenge and Selfishness, are desolate —
A hundred nations swear that there shall be
Pity and Peace and Love among the good and
free !

3

“ Eldest of things, divine Equality !
Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,
The Angels of thy sway, who pour around
thee
Treasures from all the cells of human
thought
And from the stars and from the ocean
brought,
And the last living heart whose beatings
bound thee :
The powerful and the wise had sought
Thy coming ; thou, in light descending
O'er the wide land which is thine own,

The Revolt of Islam

Like the Spring whose breath is blending
All blasts of fragrance into one,
Comest upon the paths of men!
Earth bares her general bosom to thy ken,
And all her children here in glory meet
To feed upon thy smiles, and clasp thy sacred
feet.

4

“ My brethren, we are free ! The plains and
mountains,
The gray seashore, the forests, and the
fountains
Are haunts of happiest dwellers : man and
woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely
borrow
From lawless love a solace for their
sorrow —
For oft we still must weep, since we are hu-
man.
A stormy night's serenest morrow —
Whose showers are pity's gentle tears,

The Revolt of Islam

Whose clouds are smiles of those
that die

Like infants without hopes or fears,
And whose beams are joys that lie
In blended hearts — now holds domin-
ion :

The dawn of mind, which, upwards on a
pinion

Borne swift as sunrise, far illumines space,
And clasps this barren world in its own bright
embrace !

5

“ My brethren, we are free ! The fruits are
glowing

Beneath the stars, and the night winds are
flowing

O'er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are
dreaming —

Never again may blood of bird or beast
Stain with its venomous stream a human
feast,

To the pure skies in accusation steaming ;
Avenging poisons shall have ceased

The Revolt of Islam

To feed disease and fear and madness ;
The dwellers of the earth and air
Shall throng around our steps in glad-
ness,
Seeking their food or refuge there.
Our toil from thought all glorious forms
shall cull,
To make this Earth, our home, more beau-
tiful ;
And Science, and her sister Poesy,
Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the
free !

6

“ Victory, victory to the prostrate nations !
Bear witness, Night, and ye mute Constel-
lations
Who gaze on us from your crystalline cars !
Thoughts have gone forth whose powers
can sleep no more !
Victory ! Victory ! Earth’s remotest
shore,
Regions which groan beneath the antarctic
stars,

The Revolt of Islam

The green lands cradled in the roar
Of western waves, and wildernesses
Peopled and vast which skirt the
oceans
Where morning dyes her golden tresses,
Shall soon partake our high emotions :
Kings shall turn pale ! Almighty Fear
The Fiend-God, when our charmèd name
he hear,
Shall fade like shadow from his thousand
fanes,
While Truth, with Joy enthroned, o'er his
lost empire reigns ! ”

LII.

Ere she had ceased, the mists of night,
entwining
Their dim woof, floated o'er the infinite
throng ;
She, like a spirit through the darkness shin-
ing,
In tones whose sweetness silence did pro-
long

The Revolt of Islam

As if to lingering winds they did belong,
Poured forth her inmost soul : a passionate
speech

With wild and thrilling pauses woven
among,
Which whoso heard was mute, for it could
teach
To rapture like her own all listening hearts to
reach.

LIII.

Her voice was as a mountain-stream which
sweeps

The withered leaves of autumn to the
lake,

And in some deep and narrow bay then
sleeps

In the shadow of the shores : as dead
leaves wake,

Under the wave, in flowers and herbs
which make

Those green depths beautiful when skies
are blue,

The multitude so moveless did partake

The Revolt of Islam

Such living change, and kindling murmurs
flew
As o'er that speechless calm delight and won-
der grew.

LIV.

Over the plain the throngs were scattered then
In groups around the fires, which from
the sea
Even to the gorge of the first mountain-glen
Blazed wide and far: the banquet of the free
Was spread beneath many a dark cypress-
tree,
Beneath whose spires which swayed in the
red flame
Reclining as they ate, of Liberty
And Hope and Justice and Laone's name
Earth's children did a woof of happy converse
frame.

LV.

Their feast was such as Earth the general
mother
Pours from her fairest bosom, when she
smiles

The Revolt of Islam

In the embrace of Autumn ; to each other
As when some parent fondly reconciles
Her warring children, she their wrath
beguiles
With her own sustenance ; they relenting
weep : —
Such was this Festival, which, from their
isles
And continents and winds and ocean's deep,
All shapes might throng to share that fly or
walk or creep, —

LVI.

Might share in peace and innocence : for gore
Or poison none this festal did pollute,
But, piled on high, an overflowing store
Of pomegranates and citrons, fairest fruit,
Melons and dates and figs, and many a
root
Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere
yet
Accursed fire their mild juice could trans-
mute

The Revolt of Islam

Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set
In baskets ; with pure streams their thirsting
lips they wet.

LVII.

Laone had descended from the shrine,
And every deepest look and holiest mind
Fed on her form, though now those tones
divine
Were silent, as she passed ; she did unwind
Her veil, as with the crowds of her own
kind
She mixed ; some impulse made my heart
refrain
From seeking her that night, so I reclined
Amidst a group, where on the utmost plain
A festal watch-fire burned beside the dusky
main.

LVIII.

And joyous was our feast ; pathetic talk,
And wit, and harmony of choral strains,
While far Orion o'er the waves did walk
That flow among the isles, held us in
chains

The Revolt of Islam

Of sweet captivity which none disdains
Who feels : but, when his zone grew dim in
mist

Which clothes the Ocean's bosom, o'er
the plains

The multitudes went homeward to their rest,
Which that delightful day with its own shadow
blest.





Canto VI.

I.



BESIDE the dimness of the glim-
mering sea,
Weaving swift language from
impassioned themes,
With that dear friend I lingered who to me
So late had been restored, beneath the
gleams
Of the silver stars; and ever in soft
dreams
Of future love and peace sweet converse
lapped
Our willing fancies, till the pallid beams
Of the last watch-fire fell, and darkness wrapt
The waves, and each bright chain of floating
fire was snapt;

The Revolt of Islam

II.

And till we came even to the City's wall
And the great gate. Then, none knew
whence or why,
Disquiet on the multitudes did fall :
And first, one pale and breathless passed
us by,
And stared and spoke not ; then with
piercing cry
A troop of wild-eyed women, by the shrieks
Of their own terror driven, — tumultu-
ously
Hither and thither hurrying with pale cheeks,
Each one from fear unknown a sudden refuge
seeks —

III.

Then, rallying cries of treason and of danger
Resounded : and — “ They come ! to
arms ! to arms !
The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger
Comes to enslave us in his name ! to
arms ! ”

The Revolt of Islam

In vain: for Panic, the pale fiend who
 charms
Strength to forswear her right, those millions
 swept
Like waves before the tempest — these
 alarms
Came to me, as to know their cause I leapt
On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and
 scorn I wept!

IV.

For to the north I saw the town on fire,
 And its red light made morning pallid
 now,
Which burst over wide Asia; — louder,
 higher,
The yells of victory and the screams of
 woe
I heard approach, and saw the throng be-
 low
Stream through the gates like foam-wrought
 waterfalls
Fed from a thousand storms — the fear-
 ful glow

The Revolt of Islam

Of bombs flares overhead — at intervals
The red artillery's bolt mangling among them
falls.

v.

And now the horsemen come — and all was
done

Swifter than I have spoken — I beheld
Their red swords flash in the unrisen
sun.

I rushed among the rout, to have repelled
That miserable flight, — one moment
quelled

By voice and looks and eloquent despair,
As if reproach from their own hearts with-
held

Their steps, they stood ; but soon came
pouring there
New multitudes, and did those rallied bands
o'erbear.

vi.

I strove, as, drifted on some cataract
By irresistible streams, some wretch might
strive

The Revolt of Islam

Who hears its fatal roar : the files compact
 Whelmed me, and from the gate availed
 to drive
 With quickening impulse, as each bolt did
 rive
Their ranks with bloodier chasm : into the
 plain
 Disgorged at length the dead and the
 alive,
In one dread mass, were parted, and the
 stain
Of blood from mortal steel fell o'er the fields
 like rain.

VII.

For now the despot's bloodhounds, with
 their prey
 Unarmed and unaware, were gorging
 deep
Their gluttony of death ; the loose array
 Of horsemen o'er the wide fields murder-
 ing sweep,
And with loud laughter for their tyrant
 reap

The Revolt of Islam

A harvest sown with other hopes, the while,
Far overhead, ships from Propontis keep
A killing rain of fire:—when the waves
smile,
As sudden earthquakes light many a volcano-
isle,

VIII.

Thus sudden, unexpected feast was spread
For the carrion-fowls of Heaven. — I saw
the sight —
I moved — I lived — as o'er the heaps of
dead,
Whose stony eyes glared in the morning
light,
I trod; — to me there came no thought
of flight,
But with loud cries of scorn, which whoso
heard
That dreaded death felt in his veins the
might
Of virtuous shame return, the crowd I stirred,
And desperation's hope in many hearts re-
curred.

The Revolt of Islam

IX.

A band of brothers gathering round me made,
Although unarmed, a steadfast front, and,
still
Retreating, with stern looks beneath the
shade
Of gathering eyebrows, did the victors fill
With doubt even in success ; deliberate will
Inspired our growing troop ; not overthrown,
It gained the shelter of a grassy hill,
And ever still our comrades were hewn
down,
And their defenceless limbs beneath our foot-
steps strown.

X.

Immovably we stood — in joy I found
Beside me then, firm as a giant pine
Among the mountain-vapours driven around,
The old man whom I loved — his eyes
divine
With a mild look of courage answered
mine ;

The Revolt of Islam

And my young friend was near, and ardently
His hand grasped mine a moment — now
the line

Of war extended to our rallying cry
As myriads flocked in love and brotherhood to
die.

XI.

For ever while the sun was climbing Heaven
The horseman hewed our unarmed myr-
iads down

Safely, though, when by thirst of carnage
driven

Too near, those slaves were swiftly over-
thrown

By hundreds leaping on them: — flesh
and bone

Soon made our ghastly ramparts; then the
shaft

Of the artillery from the sea was thrown
More fast and fiery, and the conquerors
laughed

In pride to hear the wind our screams of tor-
ment waft.

The Revolt of Islam

XII.

For on one side alone the hill gave shelter,
So vast that phalanx of unconquered men,
And there the living in the blood did welter
Of the dead and dying, which in that
green glen,
Like stifled torrents, made a plashy fen
Under the feet—thus was the butchery
waged
While the sun clomb Heaven's eastern
steep: but, when
It 'gan to sink, a fiercer combat raged,
For in more doubtful strife the armies were
engaged.

XIII.

Within a cave upon a hill were found
A bundle of rude pikes, the instrument
Of those who war but on their native ground
For natural rights: a shout of joyance,
sent
Even from our hearts, the wide air pierced
and rent,

The Revolt of Islam

As those few arms the bravest and the best
Seized, and each sixth, thus armed, did
now present

A line which covered and sustained the rest,
A confident phalanx which the foe on every
side invest.

XIV.

That onset turned the foes to flight almost ;
But soon they saw their present strength,
and knew

That coming night would to our resolute
host

Bring victory ; so, dismounting, close they
drew

Their glittering files, and then the combat
grew

Unequal but most horrible ; — and ever

Our myriads, whom the swift bolt over-
threw,

Or the red sword, failed like a mountain-
river

Which rushes forth in foam to sink in sands
for ever.

The Revolt of Islam

XV.

Sorrow and shame to see with their own kind
Our human brethren mix, like beasts of
blood,
To mutual ruin, armed by one behind
Who sits and scoffs! — That friend so
mild and good,
Who like its shadow near my youth had
stood,
Was stabbed! — my old preserver's hoary
hair,
With the flesh clinging to its roots, was
strewed
Under my feet! I lost all sense or care,
And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

XVI.

The battle became ghastlier — in the midst
I paused, and saw how ugly and how fell,
O Hate! thou art, even when thy life thou
shedd'st
For love. The ground in many a little dell

The Revolt of Islam

Was broken, up and down whose steeps
befell
Alternate victory and defeat ; and there
The combatants with rage most horrible
Strove, and their eyes started with cracking
stare,
And impotent their tongues they lolled into
the air, —

XVII.

Flaccid and foamy, like a mad dog's hang-
ing.
Want, and Moon-madness, and the pest's
swift Bane,
When its shafts smite while yet its bow is
twanging,
Have each their mark and sign, some
ghastly stain ;
And this was thine, O War ! of hate and
pain
Thou loathèd slave. I saw all shapes of
death,
And ministered to many, o'er the
plain

The Revolt of Islam

While carnage in the sunbeam's warmth did
seethe,
Till twilight o'er the east wove her serenest
wreath.

XVIII.

The few who yet survived, resolute and firm,
Around me fought. At the decline of day,
Winding above the mountain's snowy term,
New banners shone : they quivered in the
ray
Of the sun's unseen orb — ere night the
array
Of fresh troops hemmed us in — of those
brave bands
I soon survived alone — and now I lay
Vanquished and faint, the grasp of bloody
hands
I felt, and saw on high the glare of falling
brands,

XIX.

When on my foes a sudden terror came,
And they fled, scattering. — Lo ! with
reinless speed



Cythna Putting the Army to Flight.

"A black Tartarian horse of giant frame —
On which; like to an angel, robed in white,
Sate one waving a sword."



The Revolt of Islam

A black Tartarian horse of giant frame
Comes trampling o'er the dead ; the living
bleed
Beneath the hoofs of that tremendous
steed,
On which, like to an Angel, robed in white,
Sate one waving a sword ; — the hosts
recede
And fly, as through their ranks with awful
might
Sweeps in the shadow of eve that Phantom
swift and bright.

xx.

And its path made a solitude. — I rose
And marked its coming ; it relaxed its
course
As it approached me, and the wind that
flows
Through night bore accents to mine ear
whose force
Might create smiles in death — the Tartar
horse

The Revolt of Islam

Paused, and I saw the shape its might which
 swayed,
And heard her musical pants, like the
 sweet source
Of waters in the desert, as she said,
“Mount with me, Laon, now!” — I rapidly
 obeyed.

xxi.

Then “Away! away!” she cried, and
 stretched her sword
As ’twere a scourge over the courser’s
 head,
And lightly shook the reins. — We spake
 no word,
But like the vapour of the tempest fled
Over the plain; her dark hair was dispread
Like the pine’s locks upon the lingering
 blast;
Over mine eyes its shadowy strings it
 spread
Fitfully, and the hills and streams fled fast,
As o’er their glimmering forms the steed’s
 broad shadow past.

The Revolt of Islam

XXII.

And his hoofs ground the rocks to fire and
dust,
His strong sides made the torrents rise in
spray,
And turbulence, as of a whirlwind's
gust,
Surrounded us ; — and still away ! away !
Through the desert night we sped, while
she alway
Gazed on a mountain which we neared,
whose crest,
Crowned with a marble ruin, in the
ray
Of the obscure stars gleamed ; — its rugged
breast
The steed strained up, and then his impulse did
arrest.

XXIII.

A rocky hill which overhung the ocean : —
From that lone ruin, when the steed that
panted

The Revolt of Islam

Paused, might be heard the murmur of the
motion
Of waters, as in spots for ever haunted
By the choicest winds of Heaven, which
are enchanted
To music by the wand of Solitude,
That wizard wild, and the far tents im-
planted
Upon the plain be seen by those who stood
Thence marking the dark shore of ocean's
curvèd flood.

XXIV.

One moment these were heard and seen —
another
Passed; and the two who stood beneath
that night
Each only heard or saw or felt the other;
As from the lofty steed she did alight,
Cythna (for, from the eyes whose deepest
light
Of love and sadness made my lips feel pale
With influence strange of mournfullest
delight,

The Revolt of Islam

My own sweet Cythna looked) with joy did
quail,
And felt her strength in tears of human weak-
ness fail.

xxv.

And for a space in my embrace she
rested,
Her head on my unquiet heart re-
posing,
While my faint arms her languid frame in-
vested :
At length she looked on me, and, half-
unclosing
Her tremulous lips, said : “ Friend, thy
bands were losing
The battle, as I stood before the King
In bonds. I burst them then, and,
swiftly choosing
The time, did seize a Tartar’s sword, and
spring
Upon his horse, and swift, as on the whirl-
wind’s wing,

The Revolt of Islam

XXVI.

“Have thou and I been borne beyond
pursuer,
And we are here.” — Then, turning to
the steed,
She pressed the white moon on his front
with pure
And rose-like lips, and many a fragrant
weed
From the green ruin plucked that he
might feed ; —
But I to a stone seat that Maiden led,
And, kissing her fair eyes, said, “Thou
hast need
Of rest,” and I heaped up the courser’s
bed
In a green mossy nook, with mountain-flowers
dispread.

XXVII.

Within that ruin, where a shattered portal
Looks to the eastern stars, abandoned
now

The Revolt of Islam

By man, to be the home of things immortal,
Memories like awful ghosts which come
and go,
And must inherit all he builds below,
When he is gone, a hall stood ; o'er whose
roof
Fair clinging weeds with ivy pale did
grow,
Clasping its gray rents with a verdurous
woof,
A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-
proof.

XXVIII.

The autumnal winds, as if spellbound, had
made
A natural couch of leaves in that re-
cess,
Which seasons none disturbed, but, in the
shade
Of flowering parasites, did Spring love to
dress
With their sweet blooms the wintry lone-
liness

The Revolt of Islam

Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars
whene'er

The wandering wind her nurslings might
caress ;

Whose intertwining fingers ever there
Made music wild and soft that filled the listen-
ing air.

XXIX.

We know not where we go, or what sweet
dream

May pilot us through caverns strange and
fair

Of far and pathless passion, while the stream
Of life our bark doth on its whirlpools
bear,

Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim
air :

Nor should we seek to know, so the devo-
tion

Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still
there

Louder and louder from the utmost ocean
Of universal life, attuning its commotion.

The Revolt of Islam

xxx.

To the pure all things are pure ! Oblivion
 wrapt
 Our spirits, and the fearful overthrow
Of public hope was from our being snapt,
 Though linkèd years had bound it there ;
 for now
 A power, a thirst, a knowledge, which
 below
All thoughts, like light beyond the atmos-
 phere,
 Clothing its clouds with grace, doth ever
 flow,
Came on us, as we sate in silence there,
Beneath the golden stars of the clear azure
 air : —

xxxI.

In silence which doth follow talk that causes
 The baffled heart to speak with sighs and
 tears,
When wildering passion swalloweth up the
 pauses

The Revolt of Islam

Of inexpressive speech :— the youthful
years
Which we together passed, their hopes
and fears,
The blood itself which ran within our
frames,
That likeness of the features which endears
The thoughts expressed by them, our very
names,
And all the wingèd hours which speechless
memory claims,

XXXII.

Had found a voice :— and, ere that voice
did pass,
The night grew damp and dim, and,
through a rent
Of the ruin where we sate, from the morass,
A wandering Meteor by some wild wind
sent,
Hung high in the green dome, to which
it lent
A faint and pallid lustre ; while the song

The Revolt of Islam

Of blasts, in which its blue hair quivering
bent,
Strewed strangest sounds the moving leaves
among ;
A wondrous light, the sound as of a spirit's
tongue.

XXXIII.

The Meteor showed the leaves on which
we sate,
And Cythna's glowing arms, and the
thick ties
Of her soft hair which bent with gathered
weight
My neck near hers, her dark and deepen-
ing eyes,
Which, as twin phantoms of one star that
lies
O'er a dim well, move though the star reposes,
Swam in our mute and liquid ecstasies,
Her marble brow, and eager lips, like
roses,
With their own fragrance pale, which Spring
but half uncloses.

The Revolt of Islam

XXXIV.

The Meteor to its far morass returned :
The beating of our veins one interval
Made still ; and then I felt the blood that
burned
Within her frame mingle with mine, and
fall
Around my heart like fire ; and over all
A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep
And speechless swoon of joy, as might
befall
Two disunited spirits when they leap
In union from this earth's obscure and fading
sleep.

XXXV.

Was it one moment that confounded thus
All thought, all sense, all feeling, into
one
Unutterable power, which shielded us
Even from our own cold looks, when we
had gone
Into a wide and wild oblivion

The Revolt of Islam

Of tumult and of tenderness? or now
Had ages, such as make the moon and
sun,
The seasons and mankind, their changes
know,
Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below?

XXXVI.

I know not. What are kisses whose fire
clasps
The failing heart in languishment, or limb
Twined within limb? or the quick dying
gasps
Of the life meeting, when the faint eyes
swim
Through tears of a wide mist boundless
and dim,
In one caress? What is the strong control
Which leads the heart that dizzy steep
to climb
Where far over the world those vapours roll
Which blend two restless frames in one repos-
ing soul?

The Revolt of Islam

XXXVII.

It is the shadow which doth float unseen,
But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality,
Whose divine darkness fled not from that
green
And lone recess, where lapped in peace
did lie
Our linkèd frames, till from the changing
sky
That night and still another day had fled ;
And then I saw and felt. The moon was
high,
And clouds, as of a coming storm, were
spread
Under its orb,—loud wings were gathering
overhead.

XXXVIII.

Cythna's sweet lips seemed lurid in the
moon,
Her fairest limbs with the night wind
were chill,
And her dark tresses were all loosely strewn

The Revolt of Islam

O'er her pale bosom : — all within was still,
And the sweet peace of joy did almost fill
The depth of her unfathomable look ;—
And we sate calmly, though that rocky
hill

The waves contending in its caverns strook,
For they foreknew the storm, and the gray
ruin shook.

XXXIX.

There we unheeding sate, in the communion
Of interchangèd vows which, with a rite
Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamped our
union. —

Few were the living hearts which could
unite

Like ours, or celebrate a bridal-night
With such close sympathies ; for they had
sprung

From linkèd youth, and from the gentle
might

Of earliest love, delayed and cherished long,
Which common hopes and fears made, like a
tempest, strong.

The Revolt of Islam

XL.

And such is Nature's law divine that those
Who grow together cannot choose but love,
If faith or custom do not interpose,
Or common slavery mar what else might
move
All gentlest thoughts ; as, in the sacred
grove
Which shades the springs of Ethiopian Nile,
That living tree which if the arrowy dove
Strike with her shadow shrinks in fear awhile,
But its own kindred leaves clasps while the
sunbeams smile,

XLI.

And clings to them when darkness may dis-
sever
The close caresses of all duller plants
Which bloom on the wide earth ; — thus we
for ever
Were linked, for love had nursed us in
the haunts

The Revolt of Islam

Where knowledge from its secret source
enchants
Young hearts with the fresh music of its
springing,
Ere yet its gathered flood feeds human
wants,
As the great Nile feeds Egypt; ever fling-
ing
Light on the woven boughs which o'er its
waves are swinging.

XLII.

The tones of Cythna's voice like echoes
were
Of those far murmuring streams; they
rose and fell,
Mixed with mine own in the tempestuous
air, —
And so we sate, until our talk befell
Of the late ruin, swift and horrible,
And how those seeds of hope might yet be
sown
Whose fruit is evil's mortal poison : well

The Revolt of Islam

For us this ruin made a watch-tower lone,
But Cythna's eyes looked faint, and now two
days were gone

XLIII.

Since she had food : — therefore I did awaken
The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon
mane
Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken,
Bent his thin head to seek the brazen
rein,
Following me obediently ; with pain
Of heart so deep and dread that one caress,
When lips and heart refuse to part again
Till they have told their fill, could scarce
express
The anguish of her mute and fearful tender-
ness,

XLIV.

Cythna beheld me part, as I bestrode
That willing steed — the tempest and the
night,
Which gave my path its safety as I rode

The Revolt of Islam

Down the ravine of rocks, did soon
unite
The darkness and the tumult of their
might
Borne on all winds. — Far, through the
streaming rain
Floating, at intervals the garments white
Of Cythna gleamed, and her voice once
again
Came to me on the gust, and soon I reached
the plain.

XLV.

I dreaded not the tempest, nor did he
Who bore me, but his eyeballs wide and
red
Turned on the lightning's cleft exultingly :
And, when the earth beneath his tameless
tread
Shook with the sullen thunder, he would
spread
His nostrils to the blast, and joyously
Mock the fierce peal with neighings ; —
thus we sped

The Revolt of Islam

O'er the lit plain, and soon I could descry
Where Death and Fire had gorged the spoil
of victory.

XLVI.

There was a desolate village in a wood,
Whose bloom-inwoven leaves now scattering fed
The hungry storm ; it was a place of blood,
A heap of hearthless walls ; — the flames
were dead
Within those dwellings now, — the life
had fled
From all those corpses now, — but the wide
sky,
Flooded with lightning, was ribbed overhead
By the black rafters, and around did lie
Women and babes and men slaughtered confusedly.

XLVII.

Beside the fountain in the market-place
Dismounting, I beheld those corpses
stare

The Revolt of Islam

With horny eyes upon each other's face,
And on the earth, and on the vacant
air,
And upon me, close to the waters where
I stooped to slake my thirst ; — I shrank to
taste,
For the salt bitterness of blood was there ;
But tied the steed beside, and sought in
haste
If any yet survived amid that ghastly waste.

XLVIII.

No living thing was there beside one woman
Whom I found wandering in the streets,
and she
Was withered from a likeness of aught human
Into a fiend, by some strange misery :
Soon as she heard my steps, she leaped
on me,
And glued her burning lips to mine, and
laughed
With a loud, long, and frantic laugh of
glee,

The Revolt of Islam

And cried, " Now, Mortal, thou hast deeply
quaffed
The Plague's blue kisses — soon millions shall
pledge the draught !

XLIX.

" My name is Pestilence — this bosom
dry
Once fed two babes — a sister and a
brother —
When I came home, one in the blood did
lie
Of three death-wounds — the flames had
ate the other !
Since then I have no longer been a
mother,
But I am Pestilence ; — hither and thither
I flit about, that I may slay and
smother ; —
All lips which I have kissed must surely
wither,
But Death's — if thou art he, we'll go to work
together !

The Revolt of Islam

L.

“What seek'st thou here? The moonlight
comes in flashes, —

The dew is rising dankly from the dell —
'Twill moisten her! and thou shalt see the
gashes

In my sweet boy, now full of worms —
but tell

First what thou seek'st.” — “I seek for
food.” — “'Tis well,

Thou shalt have food; Famine, my par-
amour,

Waits for us at the feast — cruel and fell
Is Famine, but he drives not from his door
Those whom these lips have kissed, alone.
No more, no more!”

LI.

As thus she spake, she grasped me with the
strength

Of madness, and by many a ruined hearth
She led, and over many a corpse : — at length

The Revolt of Islam

We came to a lone hut, where, on the
earth
Which made its floor, she in her ghastly
mirth,
Gathering from all those homes now desolate,
Had piled three heaps of loaves, making a
dearth
Among the dead — round which she set in
state
A ring of cold stiff babes ; silent and stark they
sate.

LII.

She leaped upon a pile, and lifted high
Her mad looks to the lightning, and
cried : “ Eat !
Share the great feast — to-morrow we must
die ! ”
And then she spurned the loaves, with her
pale feet,
Towards her bloodless guests ; — that sight
to meet,
Mine eyes and my heart ached, and, but
that she

The Revolt of Islam

Who loved me did with absent looks
defeat

Despair, I might have raved in sympathy :
But now I took the food that woman offered
me ;

LIII.

And, vainly having with her madness striven
If I might win her to return with me,
Departed. In the eastern beams of Heaven
The lightning now grew pallid — rapidly
As by the shore of the tempestuous sea
The dark steed bore me, and the mountain
gray

Soon echoed to his hoofs, and I could see
Cythna among the rocks, where she alway
Had sate with anxious eyes fixed on the linger-
ing day.

LIV.

And joy was ours to meet : she was most
pale,

Famished, and wet, and weary ; so I cast
My arms around her, lest her steps should
fail

The Revolt of Islam

As to our home we went, and thus embraced,
Her full heart seemed a deeper joy to taste
Than e'er the prosperous know; the steed behind
Trode peacefully along the mountain waste:
We reach our home ere morning could unbind
Night's latest veil, and on our bridal-couch reclined.

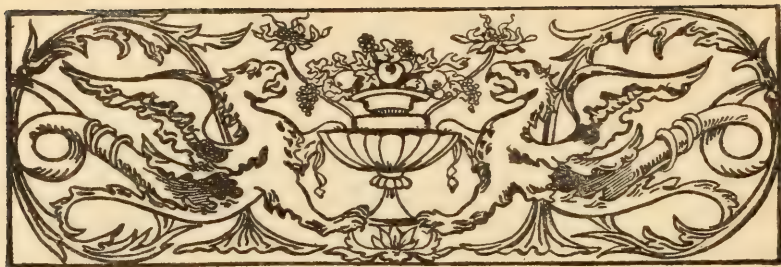
LV.

Her chilled heart having cherished in my bosom,
And sweetest kisses past, we two did share
Our peaceful meal:—as an autumnal blossom
Which spreads its shrunk leaves in the sunny air
After cold showers, like rainbows woven there,
Thus in her lips and cheeks the vital spirit

The Revolt of Islam

Mantled, and in her eyes an atmosphere
Of health and hope ; and sorrow languished
near it,
And fear, and all that dark despondence doth
inherit.





Canto VII.

I.



O we sate joyous as the morning
ray
Which fed upon the wrecks of
night and storm
Now lingering on the winds ; light airs did
play
Among the dewy weeds, the sun was
warm,
And we sate linked in the inwoven charm
Of converse and caresses sweet and deep,
Speechless caresses, talk that might disarm
Time, though he wield the darts of death
and sleep,
And those thrice mortal barbs in his own
poison steep.

The Revolt of Islam

II.

I told her of my sufferings and my madness,
And how, awakened from that dreamy
mood
By Liberty's uprising, the strength of gladness
Came to my spirit in my solitude ;
And all that now I was ; while tears pursued
Each other down her fair and listening cheek
Fast as the thoughts which fed them, like
a flood
From sunbright dales ; and, when I ceased
to speak,
Her accents soft and sweet the pausing air did
wake.

III.

She told me a strange tale of strange endurance,
Like broken memories of many a heart
Woven into one ; to which no firm assurance,
So wild were they, could her own faith
impart.

The Revolt of Islam

She said that not a tear did dare to start
From the swoln brain, and that her thoughts
were firm,

When from all mortal hope she did depart,
Borne by those slaves across the ocean's term,
And that she reached the port without one
fear infirm.

IV.

One was she among many there, the thralls
Of the cold Tyrant's cruel lust : and they
Laughed mournfully in those polluted halls ;
But she was calm and sad, musing alway
On loftiest enterprise, till on a day
The Tyrant heard her singing to her lute
A wild and sad and spirit-thrilling lay,
Like winds that die in wastes — one moment
mute
The evil thoughts it made which did his breast
pollute.

V.

Even when he saw her wondrous loveliness,
One moment to great Nature's sacred
power

The Revolt of Islam

He bent, and was no longer passionless ;
But, when he bade her to his secret bower
Be borne, a loveless victim, and she tore
Her locks in agony, and her words of flame
And mightier looks availed not ; then
he bore
Again his load of slavery, and became
A king, a heartless beast, a pageant and a name.

VI.

She told me what a loathsome agony
Is that when selfishness mocks love's
delight,
Foul as in dream's most fearful imagery
To dally with the mowing dead — that
night
All torture, fear, or horror, made seem light
Which the soul dreams or knows, and, when
the day
Shone on her awful frenzy, from the sight,
Where like a Spirit in fleshly chains she lay
Struggling, aghast and pale the Tyrant fled
away.

The Revolt of Islam

VII.

Her madness was a beam of light, a power
Which dawned through the rent soul;
and words it gave,
Gestures, and looks, such as in whirlwinds
bore
(Which might not be withstood, whence
none could save)
All who approached their sphere, like
some calm wave
Vexed into whirlpools by the chasms be-
neath;
And sympathy made each attendant slave
Fearless and free, and they began to
breathe
Deep curses, like the voice of flames far under-
neath.

VIII.

The King felt pale upon his noonday
throne:
At night two slaves he to her chamber
sent;

The Revolt of Islam

One was a green and wrinkled eunuch,
grown
From human shape into an instrument
Of all things ill — distorted, bowed, and
bent ;
The other was a wretch from infancy
Made dumb by poison, who nought knew
or meant
But to obey ; from the fire-isles came he,
A diver lean and strong, of Oman's coral sea.

IX.

They bore her to a bark, and the swift stroke
Of silent rowers clove the blue moonlight
seas,
Until upon their path the morning broke ;
They anchored then where, be there calm
or breeze,
The gloomiest of the drear Symplegades
Shakes with the sleepless surge ; — the
Ethiop there
Wound his long arms around her, and
with knees

The Revolt of Islam

Like iron clasped her feet, and plunged with
her
Among the closing waves out of the boundless
air.

x.

“Swift as an eagle stooping from the plain
Of morning light into some shadowy
wood,
He plunged through the green silence of
the main,
Through many a cavern which the eternal
flood
Had scooped as dark lairs for its monster
brood ;
And among mighty shapes which fled in
wonder,
And among mightier shadows which pur-
sued
His heels, he wound ; until the dark rocks
under
He touched a golden chain — a sound arose
like thunder.

The Revolt of Islam

XI.

“A stunning clang of massive bolts redoubling
Beneath the deep — a burst of waters
driven
As from the roots of the sea, raging and
bubbling :
And in that roof of crags a space was
riven
Through which there shone the emerald
beams of heaven,
Shot through the lines of many waves in-
woven
Like sunlight through acacia woods at
even,
Through which his way the diver having
cloven
Passed like a spark sent up out of a burning
oven.

XII.

“And then,” she said, “he laid me in a
cave
Above the waters, by that chasm of sea,

The Revolt of Islam

A fountain round and vast, in which the
 wave,
Imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually,
Down which, one moment resting, he did
 flee,
Winning the adverse depth ; that spacious
 cell
Like an hupaithric temple wide and high,
Whose aëry dome is inaccessible,
Was pierced with one round cleft through which
 the sunbeams fell.

XIII.

“ Below, the fountain’s brink was richly paven
 With the deep’s wealth, coral and pearl,
 and sand
Like spangling gold, and purple shells en-
 graven
With mystic legends by no mortal hand,
Left there when, thronging to the moon’s
 command,
The gathering waves rent the Hesperian
 gate

The Revolt of Islam

Of mountains, and on such bright floor
did stand
Columns, and shapes like statues, and the
state
Of kingless thrones, which Earth did in her
heart create.

XIV.

“The fiend of madness which had made its
prey
Of my poor heart was lulled to sleep
awhile :
There was an interval of many a day,
And a sea-eagle brought me food the
while,
Whose nest was built in that untrodden
isle,
And who to be the gaoler had been taught
Of that strange dungeon ; as a friend whose
smile
Like light and rest at morn and even is
sought
That wild bird was to me, till madness misery
brought.

The Revolt of Islam

XV.

“ The misery of a madness slow and creeping,
Which made the earth seem fire, the sea
seem air,
And the white clouds of noon, which oft
were sleeping
In the blue heaven so beautiful and fair,
Like hosts of ghastly shadows hovering
there ;
And the sea-eagle looked a fiend who bore
Thy mangled limbs for food ! — Thus all
things were
Transformed into the agony which I wore
Even as a poisoned robe around my bosom’s
core.

XVI.

“ Again I knew the day and night fast fleeing,
The eagle and the fountain and the air ;
Another frenzy came — there seemed a being
Within me — a strange load my heart did
bear,
As if some living thing had made its lair

The Revolt of Islam

Even in the fountains of my life :— a
long
And wondrous vision, wrought from my
despair,
Then grew, like sweet reality among
Dim visionary woes, an unreposing throng.

XVII.

“Methought I was about to be a mother —
Month after month went by, and still I
dreamed
That we should soon be all to one another,
I and my child ; and still new pulses
seemed
To beat beside my heart, and still I
deemed
There was a babe within — and, when the
rain
Of winter through the rifted cavern
streamed,
Methought, after a lapse of lingering pain,
I saw that lovely shape which near my heart
had lain.

The Revolt of Islam

XVIII.

“ It was a babe, beautiful from its birth, —
It was like thee, dear love, its eyes were
thine,
Its brow, its lips, and so upon the earth
It laid its fingers as now rest on mine
Thine own, beloved! — ’twas a dream
divine;
Even to remember how it fled, how swift,
How utterly, might make the heart re-
pine, —
Though ’twas a dream.” — Then Cythna
did uplift
Her looks on mine, as if some doubt she
sought to shift:

XIX.

A doubt which would not flee, a tenderness
Of questioning grief, a source of throng-
ing tears:
Which having passed, as one whom sobs
oppress
She spoke: “ Yes, in the wilderness of years

The Revolt of Islam

Her memory aye like a green home ap-
pears ;
She sucked her fill even at this breast,
sweet love,
For many months. I had no mortal
fears ;
Methought I felt her lips and breath ap-
prove
It was a human thing which to my bosom clove.

xx.

“I watched the dawn of her first smiles, and
soon,
When zenith-stars were trembling on the
wave,
Or when the beams of the invisible moon
Or sun from many a prism within the cave
Their gem-born shadows to the water
gave,
Her looks would hunt them, and with out-
spread hand,
From the swift lights which might that
fountain pave,

The Revolt of Islam

She would mark one, and laugh when, that
command
Slighting, it lingered there, and could not
understand.

XXI.

“Methought her looks began to talk with
me :
And no articulate sounds but something
sweet
Her lips would frame, — so sweet it could
not be
That it was meaningless ; her touch would
meet
Mine, and our pulses calmly flow and
beat
In response while we slept ; and, on a
day
When I was happiest in that strange
retreat,
With heaps of golden shells we two did
play, —
Both infants weaving wings for time’s perpet-
ual way.

The Revolt of Islam

XXII.

“ Ere night, methought, her waning eyes
were grown
Weary with joy, and, tired with our
delight,
We on the earth like sister twins lay down
On one fair mother’s bosom : — from that
night
She fled ; — like those illusions clear and
bright
Which dwell in lakes when the red moon on
high
Pause ere it wakens tempest ; — and her
flight,
Though ’twas the death of brainless fantasy,
Yet smote my lonesome heart more than all
misery.

XXIII.

“ It seemed that in the dreary night, the
diver
Who brought me thither came again, and
bore

The Revolt of Islam

My child away. I saw the waters quiver
When he so swiftly sunk, as once before :
Then morning came — it shone even as of
yore,
But I was changed — the very life was gone
Out of my heart — I wasted more and
more
Day after day, and, sitting there alone,
Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual
moan.

XXIV.

“ I was no longer mad, and yet methought
My breasts were swoln and changed :
— in every vein
The blood stood still one moment, while
that thought
Was passing — with a gush of sickening
pain
It ebbed even to its withered springs
again :
When my wan eyes in stern resolve I turned
From that most strange delusion, which
would fain

The Revolt of Islam

Have waked the dream for which my spirit
yearned
With more than human love, — then left it
unreturned.

xxv.

“ So, now my reason was restored to me,
I struggled with that dream, which, like a
beast
Most fierce and beauteous, in my memory
Had made its lair, and on my heart did feast;
But all that cave and all its shapes, possess
By thoughts which could not fade, renewed
each one
Some smile, some look, some gesture,
which had blest
Me heretofore ; I, sitting there alone,
Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual
moan.

xxvi.

“ Time passed, I know not whether months or
years ;
For day nor night nor change of seasons
made

The Revolt of Islam

Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears ;
And I became at last even as a shade,
A smoke, a cloud on which the winds
have preyed
Till it be thin as air ; until, one even,
A Nautilus upon the fountain played,
Spreading his azure sail where breath of
Heaven
Descended not, among the waves and whirl-
pools driven.

XXVII.

“ And, when the Eagle came, that lovely thing,
Oaring with rosy feet its silver boat,
Fled near me as for shelter ; on slow wing
The Eagle hovering o’er his prey did float ;
But, when he saw that I with fear did
note
His purpose, proffering my own food to him,
The eager plumes subsided on his throat —
He came where that bright child of sea did
swim,
And o’er it cast in peace his shadow broad and
dim.

The Revolt of Islam

XXVIII.

“ This wakened me, it gave me human
strength ;
And hope, I know not whence or where-
fore, rose,
But I resumed my ancient powers at
length ;
My spirit felt again like one of those,
Like thine, whose fate it is to make the
woes
Of humankind their prey — what was this
cave ?
Its deep foundation no firm purpose
knows,
Immutable, resistless, strong to save,
Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring
grave.

XXIX.

“ And where was Laon ? might my heart be
dead
While that far dearer heart could move
and be ?

The Revolt of Islam

Or whilst over the earth the pall was spread
Which I had sworn to rend? I might be
free,
Could I but win that friendly bird to me
To bring me ropes; and long in vain I
sought,
By intercourse of mutual imagery
Of objects, if such aid he could be taught;
But fruit and flowers and boughs, yet never
ropes, he brought.

xxx.

“ We live in our own world, and mine was
made
From glorious fantasies of hope departed :
Ay, we are darkened with their floating shade,
Or cast a lustre on them — time imparted
Such power to me I became fearless-
hearted,
My eye and voice grew firm, calm was my
mind,
And piercing, like the morn now it has
darted

The Revolt of Islam

Its lustre on all hidden things behind
Yon dim and fading clouds which load the
weary wind.

XXXI.

“My mind became the book through which I
grew

Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave,
Which like a mine I rifled through and
through,

To me the keeping of its secrets gave, —
One mind, the type of all, the moveless
wave

Whose calm reflects all moving things that
are,

Necessity and love and life, the grave
And sympathy, fountains of hope and fear,
Justice and truth and time and the world's
natural sphere.

XXXII.

“And on the sand would I make signs to range
These woofs, as they were woven, of my
thought;

The Revolt of Islam

Clear elemental shapes, whose smallest
change

A subtler language within language
wrought:

The key of truths which once were dimly
taught

In old Crotona; — and sweet melodies

Of love in that lorn solitude I caught

From mine own voice in dream, when thy
dear eyes

Shone through my sleep, and did that utter-
ance harmonize.

XXXIII.

“Thy songs were winds whereon I fled at
will,

As in a wingèd chariot, o’er the plain
Of crystal youth; and thou wert there to
fill

My heart with joy, and there we sate
again

On the gray margin of the glimmering
main,

The Revolt of Islam

Happy as then, but wiser far, for we
Smiled on the flowery grave in which were
lain
Fear, Faith, and Slavery ; and mankind was
free,
Equal and pure and wise, in wisdom's proph-
ecy.

XXXIV.

“ For to my will my fancies were as slaves
To do their sweet and subtile ministries ;
And oft from that bright fountain's shadowy
waves
They would make human throngs gather
and rise
To combat with my overflowing eyes
And voice made deep with passion — thus I
grew
Familiar with the shock and the sur-
prise
And war of earthly minds, from which I
drew
The power which has been mine to frame their
thoughts anew.

The Revolt of Islam

XXXV.

“ And thus my prison was the populous
earth —

Where I saw — even as misery dreams of
morn

Before the east has given its glory birth —

Religion’s pomp made desolate by the
scorn

Of Wisdom’s faintest smile, and thrones
uptorn,

And dwellings of mild people interspersed

With undivided fields of ripening corn,

And love made free, — a hope which we
have nurst

Even with our blood and tears, — until its
glory burst.

XXXVI.

“ All is not lost ! There is some recompense

For hope whose fountain can be thus
profound,

Even thronèd Evil’s splendid impotence

Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound

The Revolt of Islam

Of hymns to truth and freedom — the
dread bound
Of life and death passed fearlessly and well,
Dungeons wherein the high resolve is
found,
Racks which degraded woman's greatness tell,
And what may else be good and irresistible.

XXXVII.

“Such are the thoughts which, like the fires
that flare
In storm-encompassed isles, we cherish yet
In this dark ruin — such were mine even
there ;
As in its sleep some odorous violet,
While yet its leaves with nightly dews are
wet,
Breathes in prophetic dreams of day's uprising,
Or as, ere Scythian frost in fear has met
Spring's messengers descending from the
skies,
The buds foreknow their life — this hope must
ever rise.

The Revolt of Islam

XXXVIII.

“So years had passed, when sudden earth-
quake rent
The depth of ocean, and the cavern
crackt,
With sound as if the world's wide continent
Had fallen in universal ruin wrackt :
And through the cleft streamed in one
cataract
The stifling waters. — When I woke, the
flood,
Whose banded waves that crystal cave
had sacked,
Was ebbing round me, and my bright abode
Before me yawned — a chasm desert and bare
and broad.

XXXIX.

“Above me was the sky, beneath the sea :
I stood upon a point of shattered stone,
And heard loose rocks rushing tumultuously
With splash and shock into the deep —
anon

The Revolt of Islam

All ceased, and there was silence wide and
lone.

I felt that I was free ! The ocean spray
Quivered beneath my feet, the broad
Heaven shone
Around, and in my hair the winds did play,
Lingering, as they pursued their unimpeded
way.

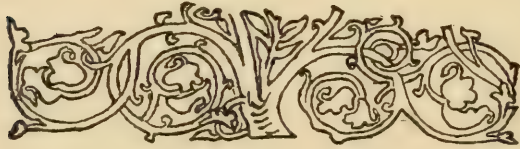
XL.

“ My spirit moved upon the sea like wind,
Which round some thymy cape will lag
and hover,
Though it can wake the still cloud, and unbind
The strength of tempest : day was almost
over,
When through the fading light I could
discover
A ship approaching — its white sails were fed
With the north wind — its moving shade
did cover
The twilight deep ; — the mariners in dread
Cast anchor when they saw new rocks around
them spread.

The Revolt of Islam

XLI.

“ And, when they saw one sitting on a crag,
They sent a boat to me ;— the sailors
rowed
In awe through many a new and fearful jag
Of overhanging rock, through which there
flowed
The foam of streams that cannot make
abode.
They came and questioned me, but, when
they heard
My voice, they became silent, and they
stood
And moved as men in whom new love had
stirred
Deep thoughts : so to the ship we passed with-
out a word.





Canto VIII.

I.



LATE beside the steersman then,
and, gazing
Upon the west, cried, 'Spread
the sails! Behold!

The sinking moon is like a watch-tower
blazing

Over the mountains yet; the City of Gold
Yon cape alone does from the sight with-
hold;

The stream is fleet — the north breathes
steadily

Beneath the stars, they tremble with the
cold!

Ye cannot rest upon the dreary sea! —
Haste, haste to the warm home of happier
destiny!'

The Revolt of Islam

II.

“The mariners obeyed — the Captain stood
Aloof, and, whispering to the pilot, said :
‘ Alas, alas ! I fear we are pursued
By wicked ghosts : a Phantom of the
Dead,
The night before we sailed, came to my bed
In dream, like that ! ’ The pilot then
replied :
‘ It cannot be — she is a human Maid —
Her low voice makes you weep — she is
some bride
Or daughter of high birth — she can be nought
beside.’

III.

“We passed the islets, borne by wind and
stream,
And, as we sailed, the mariners came near
And thronged around to listen ; — in the
gleam
Of the pale moon I stood, as one whom
fear

The Revolt of Islam

May not attain, and my calm voice did
rear ;

‘ Ye all are human — yon broad moon gives
light

To millions who the selfsame likeness wear,
Even while I speak — beneath this very
night

Their thoughts flow on like ours, in sadness or
delight.

IV.

“What dream ye? Your own hands have
built an home,

Even for yourselves on a beloved shore :
For some, fond eyes are pining till they
come,

How they will greet him when his toils
are o’er,

And laughing babes rush from the well-
known door !

Is this your care? ye toil for your own
good —

Ye feel and think — has some immortal
power

The Revolt of Islam

Such purposes? or, in a human mood,
Dream ye some Power thus builds for man in
solitude?

v.

““What is that Power? Ye mock yourselves,
and give
A human heart to what ye cannot know:
As if the cause of life could think and live!
'Twere as if man's own works should feel,
and show
The hopes and fears and thoughts from
which they flow,
And he be like to them! Lo! Plague is free
To waste, Blight, Poison, Earthquake,
Hail, and Snow,
Disease, and Want, and worse Necessity
Of hate and ill, and Pride, and Fear, and
Tyranny!

vi.

““What is that Power? Some moonstruck
sophist stood
Watching the shade from his own soul
upthrown

The Revolt of Islam

Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such
mood
The Form he saw and worshipped was his
own,
His likeness in the world's vast mirror
shown ;
And 'twere an innocent dream, but that a
faith
Nursed by fear's dew of poison grows
thereon,
And that men say that Power has chosen
Death
On all who scorn its laws to wreak immortal
wrath.

VII.

“Men say that they themselves have heard
and seen,
Or known from others who have known
such things,
A Shade, a Form, which Earth and Heaven
between,
Wields an invisible rod — that Priests and
Kings,

The Revolt of Islam

Custom, domestic sway, ay all that brings
Man's freeborn soul beneath the oppressor's
heel,
Are his strong ministers, and that the
stings
Of death will make the wise his vengeance
feel,
Though truth and virtue arm their hearts with
tenfold steel.

VIII.

“And it is said this Power will punish wrong;
Yes, add despair to crime, and pain to
pain!
And deepest hell and deathless snakes
among
Will bind the wretch on whom is fixed a
stain
Which like a plague, a burden, and a
bane,
Clung to him while he lived;—for love
and hate,
Virtue and vice, they say, are difference
vain—

The Revolt of Islam

The will of strength is right — this human
state
Tyrants, that they may rule, with lies thus
desolate.

IX.

“Alas, what strength? Opinion is more frail
Than yon dim cloud now fading on the
moon
Even while we gaze, though it awhile avail
To hide the orb of truth — and every
throne
Of Earth or Heaven, though shadow,
rests thereon,
One shape of many names: — for this ye
plough
The barren waves of ocean, hence each one
Is slave or tyrant; all betray and bow,
Command or kill or fear, or wreak or suffer
woe.

X.

“Its names are each a sign which maketh holy
All power — ay, the ghost, the dream, the
shade,

The Revolt of Islam

Of power — lust, falsehood, hate, and pride,
and folly ;

The pattern whence all fraud and wrong
is made,

A law to which mankind has been be-
trayed ;

And human love is as the name well known
Of a dear mother whom the murderer laid
In bloody grave, and, into darkness thrown,
Gathered her wildered babes around him as his
own.

XI.

““Oh ! Love, who to the heart of wandering
man

Art as the calm to ocean's weary waves !
Justice, or truth, or joy ! those only can
From slavery and religion's labyrinth
caves

Guide us, as one clear star the seaman
saves.

To give to all an equal share of good,
To track the steps of Freedom, though
through graves

The Revolt of Islam

She pass, to suffer all in patient mood,
To weep for crime, though stained with thy
friend's dearest blood, —

XII.

“To feel the peace of self-contentment's lot,
To own all sympathies, and outrage none,
And in the inmost bowers of sense and
thought,
Until life's sunny day is quite gone down,
To sit and smile with Joy, or, not alone,
To kiss salt tears from the worn cheek of
Woe ;
To live as if to love and live were one ; —
This is not faith or law, nor those who bow
To thrones on Heaven or Earth such destiny
may know.

XIII.

“But children near their parents tremble now,
Because they must obey — one rules an-
other,
And, as one Power rules both high and low,
So man is made the captive of his brother,

The Revolt of Islam

And Hate is throned on high with Fear
his mother,
Above the Highest — and those fountain-
cells
Whence love yet flowed when faith had
choked all other
Are darkened — Woman as the bond-slave
dwells
Of man, a slave ; and life is poisoned in its
wells.

XIV.

“Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may
weave
A lasting chain for his own slavery ; —
In fear and restless care that he may live,
He toils for others, who must ever be
The joyless thralls of like captivity ;
He murders, for his chiefs delight in
ruin ;
He builds the altar, that its idol's fee
May be his very blood ; he is pursuing —
Oh blind and willing wretch ! — his own ob-
scure undoing.

The Revolt of Islam

xv.

““Woman! — she is his slave, she has become
A thing I weep to speak — the child of
scorn,
The outcast of a desolated home;
Falsehood and fear and toil like waves
have worn
Channels upon her cheek, which smiles
adorn
As calm decks the false ocean:—well ye know
What Woman is, for none of Woman born
Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe,
Which ever from the oppressed to the oppress-
ors flow.

xvi.

““This need not be; ye might arise, and will
That gold should lose its power, and
thrones their glory;
That love, which none may bind, be free
to fill
The world, like light; and evil faith,
grown hoary

The Revolt of Islam

With crime, be quenched and die. — Yon
promontory
Even now eclipses the descending moon! —
Dungeons and palaces are transitory —
High temples fade like vapour — Man alone
Remains, whose will has power when all beside
is gone.

XVII.

“Let all be free and equal! — From your
hearts
I feel an echo; through my inmost
frame,
Like sweetest sound, seeking its mate, it
darts. —
Whence come ye, friends? Alas, I can-
not name
All that I read of sorrow, toil, and
shame,
On your worn faces; as in legends old
Which make immortal the disastrous fame
Of conquerors and impostors false and bold,
The discord of your hearts I in your looks
behold.

The Revolt of Islam

XVIII.

“Whence come ye, friends? from pouring
human blood
Forth on the earth? Or bring ye steel
and gold,
That kings may dupe and slay the multitude?
Or from the famished poor, pale, weak,
and cold,
Bear ye the earnings of their toil? Unfold!
Speak! Are your hands in slaughter’s san-
guine hue
Stained freshly? have your hearts in guile
grown old?
Know yourselves thus! ye shall be pure as
dew,
And I will be a friend and sister unto you.

XIX.

“Disguise it not—we have one human
heart—
All mortal thoughts confess a common
home:

The Revolt of Islam

Blush not for what may to thyself impart
Stains of inevitable crime : the doom
Is this which has, or may, or must, be-
come
Thine, and all humankind's. Ye are the
spoil
Which Time thus marks for the devour-
ing tomb,
Thou and thy thoughts, and they, and all
the toil
Wherewith ye twine the rings of life's perpetual
coil.

xx.

“ ‘ Disguise it not — ye blush for what ye
hate,
And Enmity is sister unto Shame ;
Look on your mind — it is the book of
fate —
Ah ! it is dark with many a blazoned name
Of misery — all are mirrors of the same ;
But the dark fiend who with his iron pen,
Dipped in scorn's fiery poison, makes his
fame

The Revolt of Islam

Enduring there, would o'er the heads of men
Pass harmless, if they scorned to make their
 hearts his den.

XXI.

“ ‘ Yes, it is Hate — that shapeless fiendly
 thing
Of many names, all evil, some divine —
Whom self-contempt arms with a mortal
 sting ;
Which, when the heart its snaky folds
 entwine
Is wasted quite, and when it doth repine
To gorge such bitter prey, on all beside
It turns with ninefold rage, as, with its twine
When amphisbæna some fair bird has tied,
Soon o'er the putrid mass he threats on every
 side.

XXII.

“ ‘ Reproach not thine own soul, but know
 thyself,
Nor hate another's crime, nor loathe thine
 own.

The Revolt of Islam

It is the dark idolatry of self
Which, when our thoughts and actions
once are gone,
Demands that man should weep and bleed
and groan ;
Oh vacant expiation ! Be at rest. —
The past is Death's, the future is thine
own ;
And love and joy can make the foulest breast
A paradise of flowers where peace might build
her nest.

XXIII.

“‘Speak thou ! whence come ye ?’ — A Youth
made reply :
‘Wearily, wearily o’er the boundless deep
We sail ; — thou readest well the misery
Told in these faded eyes, but much doth
sleep
Within, which there the poor heart loves
to keep,
Or dare not write on the dishonoured brow ;
Even from our childhood have we learned
to steep

The Revolt of Islam

The bread of slavery in the tears of woe,
And never dreamed of hope or refuge until
now.

XXIV.

“Yes — I must speak — my secret should
have perished
Even with the heart it wasted, as a brand
Fades in the dying flame whose life it cher-
ished,
But that no human bosom can withstand
Thee, wondrous Lady, and the mild
command
Of thy keen eyes: — yes, we are wretched
slaves,
Who from their wonted loves and native
land
Bereft, and bear o’er the dividing waves
The unregarded prey of calm and happy graves.

XXV.

“We drag afar from pastoral vales the fairest
Among the daughters of those mountains
lone,

The Revolt of Islam

We drag them there where all things best
and rarest
Are stained and trampled : — years have
come and gone
Since, like the ship which bears me, I
have known
No thought ; — but now the eyes of one
dear Maid
On mine with light of mutual love have
shone :
She is my life, — I am but as the shade
Of her — a smoke sent up from ashes, soon to
fade.

XXVI.

“‘For she must perish in the Tyrant’s hall —
Alas, alas ! ’ — He ceased, and by the sail
Sate cowering — but his sobs were heard by
all,
And still before the ocean and the gale
The ship fled fast till the stars ’gan to
fail :
And, round me gathered with mute coun-
tenance,

The Revolt of Islam

The seamen gazed, the pilot worn and
pale
With toil, the captain with gray locks,
whose glance
Met mine in restless awe — they stood as in a
trance.

XXVII.

“Recede not! pause not now! Thou art
grown old,
But Hope will make thee young, for
Hope and Youth
Are children of one mother, even Love —
behold!
The eternal stars gaze on us! — is the
truth
Within your soul? care for your own, or
ruth
For others' sufferings? do ye thirst to bear
A heart which not the serpent Custom's
tooth
May violate? — Be free! and even here
Swear to be firm till death!’ They cried ‘We
swear! We swear!’

The Revolt of Islam

XXVIII.

“The very darkness shook, as with a blast
Of subterranean thunder, at the cry ;
The hollow shore its thousand echoes cast
Into the night, as if the sea and sky
And earth rejoiced with new-born liberty,
For in that name they swore ! Bolts were
undrawn,
And on the deck, with unaccustomed eye,
The captives gazing stood, and every one
Shrank as the inconstant torch upon her coun-
tenance shone.

XXIX.

“They were earth’s purest children, young
and fair,
With eyes the shrines of unawakened
thought,
And brows as bright as Spring or morning,
ere
Dark time had there its evil legend
wrought

The Revolt of Islam

In characters of cloud which wither not. —
The change was like a dream to them ; but
soon

They knew the glory of their altered lot,
In the bright wisdom of youth's breathless
noon,
Sweet talk and smiles and sighs all bosoms did
attune.

xxx.

“ But one was mute ; her cheeks and lips
most fair,

Changing their hue like lilies newly blown
Beneath a bright acacia's shadowy hair

Waved by the wind amid the sunny noon,
Showed that her soul was quivering ; and
full soon

That Youth arose, and breathlessly did look
On her and me, as for some speechless
boon :


I smiled, and both their hands in mine I
took,

And felt a soft delight from what their spirits
shook.



Canto IX.

I.

“HAT night we anchored in a
woody bay,
And sleep no more around us
dared to hover
Than, when all doubt and fear has passed
away,
It shades the couch of some unresting
lover
Whose heart is now at rest: thus night
passed over
In mutual joy: — around, a forest grew
Of poplars and dark oaks, whose shade
did cover
The waning stars pranked in the waters
blue,
And trembled in the wind which from the
morning flew.

The Revolt of Islam

II.

“ The joyous mariners and each free maiden
Now brought from the deep forest many
a bough,
With woodland spoil most innocently laden ;
Soon wreaths of budding foliage seemed
to flow
Over the mast and sails, the stern and prow
Were canopied with blooming boughs, —
the while
On the slant sun’s path o’er the waves we
go
Rejoicing, like the dwellers of an isle
Doomed to pursue those waves that cannot
cease to smile.

III.

“ The many ships spotting the dark blue deep
With snowy sails fled fast as ours came
nigh,
In fear and wonder ; and on every steep
Thousands did gaze ; they heard the
startling cry,

The Revolt of Islam

Like Earth's own voice lifted uncon-
querably
To all her children, the unbounded mirth,
The glorious joy of thy name — Liberty !
They heard ! — As o'er the mountains of
the earth
From peak to peak leap on the beams of
morning's birth :

IV.

“So from that cry over the boundless
hills
Sudden was caught one universal sound,
Like a volcano's voice whose thunder
fills
Remotest skies, — such glorious madness
found
A path through human hearts with stream
which drowned
Its struggling fears and cares, dark Custom's
brood :
They knew not whence it came, but felt
around

The Revolt of Islam

A wide contagion poured — they called
aloud
On Liberty — that name lived on the sunny
flood.

v.

“ We reached the port. — Alas! from many
spirits
The wisdom which had waked that cry
was fled,
Like the brief glory which dark Heaven
inherits
From the false dawn, which fades ere it is
spread,
Upon the night's devouring darkness
shed :
Yet soon bright day will burst — even like a
chasm
Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and
dead
Which wrap the world ; a wide enthu-
siasm,
To cleanse the fevered world as with an earth-
quake's spasm !

The Revolt of Islam

VI.

“ I walked through the great City then, but
free
From shame or fear; those toil-worn
mariners
And happy maidens did encompass me;
And, like a subterranean wind that
stirs
Some forest among caves, the hopes and
fears
From every human soul a murmur strange
Made as I passed: and many wept, with
tears
Of joy and awe, and wingèd thoughts did
range,
And half-extinguished words which prophesied
of change.

VII.

“ For with strong speech I tore the veil that
hid
Nature and Truth and Liberty and
Love,—

The Revolt of Islam

As one who from some mountain's pyramid
Points to the unrisen sun! — the shades
approve
His truth, and flee from every stream and
grove.
Thus, gentle thoughts did many a bosom
fill, —
Wisdom the mail of tried affections wove
For many a heart, and tameless scorn of ill
Thrice steeped in molten steel the unconquer-
able will.

VIII.

“Some said I was a maniac wild and lost;
Some, that I scarce had risen from the
grave,
The Prophet's virgin bride, a heavenly
ghost: —
Some said I was a fiend from my weird
cave,
Who had stolen human shape, and o'er
the wave,
The forest, and the mountain, came; —
some said

The Revolt of Islam

I was the child of God, sent down to
save
Women from bonds and death, and on my
head
The burden of their sins would frightfully be
laid.

IX.

“But soon my human words found sym-
pathy
In human hearts: the purest and the
best,
As friend with friend, made common cause
with me,
And they were few, but resolute;—the
rest,
Ere yet success the enterprise had blest,
Leagued with me in their hearts;—their
meals, their slumber,
Their hourly occupations, were possest
By hopes which I had armed to over-
number
Those hosts of meaner cares which life’s strong
wings encumber.

The Revolt of Islam

X.

“ But chiefly women, whom my voice did
waken

From their cold, careless, willing slavery,
Sought me : one truth their dreary prison
has shaken,

They looked around, and lo ! they became
free !

Their many tyrants, sitting desolately
In slave-deserted halls, could none re-
strain ;

For wrath’s red fire had withered in the
eye

Whose lightning once was death, — nor fear
nor gain

Could tempt one captive now to lock another’s
chain.

XI.

“ Those who were sent to bind me wept,
and felt

Their minds outsoar the bonds which
clasped them round,

The Revolt of Islam

Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt
In the white furnace; and a visioned
swound,
A pause of hope and awe, the City bound,
Which, like the silence of a tempest's birth,
When in its awful shadow it has wound
The sun, the wind, the ocean, and the earth,
Hung terrible, ere yet the lightnings have
leapt forth.

XII.

“Like clouds inwoven in the silent sky
By winds from distant regions meeting
there,
In the high name of truth and liberty
Around the City millions gathered were
By hopes which sprang from many a
hidden lair,
Words which the lore of truth in hues of flame
Arrayed, thine own wild songs which in
the air
Like homeless odours floated, and the name
Of thee, and many a tongue which thou hadst
dipped in flame.

The Revolt of Islam

XIII.

“The Tyrant knew his power was gone, but
Fear,

The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait
the event —

That perfidy and custom, gold and prayer,
And whatsoe'er, when force is impotent,
To fraud the sceptre of the world has lent,
Might, as he judged, confirm his failing
sway.

Therefore throughout the streets the
priests he sent
To curse the rebels. To their gods did
they
For Earthquake, Plague, and Want, kneel in
the public way.

XIV.

“And grave and hoary men were bribed to
tell,

From seats where law is made the slave
of wrong,

The Revolt of Islam

How glorious Athens in her splendour
fell

Because her sons were free, — and that,
among

Mankind, the many to the few belong,
By Heaven, and Nature, and Necessity.

They said that age was truth, and that
the young

Marred with wild hopes the peace of slavery,
With which old times and men had quelled
the vain and free.

xv.

“And with the falsehood of their poisonous
lips

They breathed on the enduring memory
Of sages and of bards a brief eclipse ;

There was one teacher, who necessity
Had armed with strength and wrong
against mankind,

His slave and his avenger aye to be ;

That we were weak and sinful, frail and
blind,

The Revolt of Islam

And that the will of one was peace, and
we
Should seek for nought on earth but toil and
misery.

XVI.

“‘For thus we might avoid the hell here-
after.’

So spake the hypocrites, who cursed and
lied ;

Alas ! their sway was past, and tears and
laughter

Clung to their hoary hair, withering the
pride

Which in their hollow hearts dared still
abide ;

And yet obscener slaves with smother
brow,

And sneers on their strait lips, thin, blue,
and wide,

Said that the rule of men was over now,
And hence the subject world to women’s will
must bow.

The Revolt of Islam

XVII.

“ And gold was scattered through the streets,
and wine
Flowed at a hundred feasts within the
wall.
In vain ! the steady towers in Heaven did
shine
As they were wont, nor at the priestly
call
Left Plague her banquet in the Ethiop’s
hall,
Nor Famine from the rich man’s portal
came,
Where at her ease she ever preys on all
Who throng to kneel for food : nor fear nor
shame
Nor faith nor discord dimmed hope’s newly
kindled flame.

XVIII.

“ For gold was as a god whose faith began
To fade, so that its worshippers were few ;

The Revolt of Islam

And Faith itself, which in the heart of man
Gives shape, voice, name, to spectral
Terror, knew

Its downfall, as the altars lonelier grew,
Till the priests stood alone within the
fane;

The shafts of falsehood unpolluting flew,
And the cold sneers of calumny were
vain

The union of the free with discord's brand to
stain.

XIX.

“The rest thou knowest. — Lo! we two are
here —

We have survived a ruin wide and deep —
Strange thoughts are mine. — I cannot grieve
or fear;

Sitting with thee upon this lonely steep,
I smile, though human love should make
me weep.

We have survived a joy that knows no
sorrow,

And I do feel a mighty calmness creep

The Revolt of Islam

Over my heart, which can no longer borrow
Its hues from chance or change, dark children
of to-morrow.

xx.

“ We know not what will come — yet, Laon,
dearest,

Cythna shall be the prophetess of Love ;
Her lips shall rob thee of the grace thou
wearest,

To hide thy heart, and clothe the shapes
which rove

Within the homeless Future’s wintry
grove ;

For I now, sitting thus beside thee, seem
Even with thy breath and blood to live
and move,

And violence and wrong are as a dream
Which rolls from steadfast truth, an unreturn-
ing stream.

xxi.

“ The blasts of Autumn drive the wingèd seeds
Over the earth, — next come the snows,
and rain,

The Revolt of Islam

And frosts, and storms, which dreary Win-
ter leads
Out of his Scythian cave, a savage train;
Behold! Spring sweeps over the world
again,
Shedding soft dews from her ethereal wings;
Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the
plain,
And music on the waves and woods, she
flings,
And love on all that lives, and calm on lifeless
things.

XXII.

“O Spring, of hope and love and youth and
gladness
Wind-wingèd emblem! brightest, best,
and fairest!
Whence comest thou when with dark Win-
ter's sadness
The tears that fade in sunny smiles thou
sharest?
Sister of joy! thou art the child who
wearest

The Revolt of Islam

Thy mother's dying smile, tender and sweet ;
Thy mother Autumn, for whose grave
thou bearest
Fresh flowers, and beams like flowers, with
gentle feet
Disturbing not the leaves which are her wind-
ing-sheet.

XXIII.

“ Virtue and Hope and Love, like light and
Heaven,
Surround the world. We are their chosen
slaves.
Has not the whirlwind of our spirit driven
Truth's deathless germs to thought's re-
motest caves ?
Lo, Winter comes ! — the grief of many
graves,
The frost of death, the tempest of the sword,
The flood of tyranny, whose sanguine
waves
Stagnate like ice at Faith the enchanter's word,
And bind all human hearts in its repose ab-
horred !

The Revolt of Islam

XXIV.

“ The seeds are sleeping in the soil. Meanwhile
The Tyrant peoples dungeons with his
prey,
Pale victims on the guarded scaffold smile
Because they cannot speak ; and, day by
day,
The moon of wasting Science wanes away
Among her stars, and in that darkness
vast
The sons of earth to their foul idols pray,
And gray priests triumph, and like blight or
blast
A shade of selfish care o’er human looks is
cast.

XXV.

“ This is the winter of the world ; — and here
We die, even as the winds of Autumn
fade,
Expiring in the frore and foggy air. —
Behold ! Spring comes, though we must
pass who made

The Revolt of Islam

The promise of its birth, even as the shade
Which from our death, as from a mountain,
flings

The future, a broad sunrise ; thus arrayed
As with the plumes of overshadowing wings,
From its dark gulf of chains Earth like an
eagle springs.

XXVI.

“ O dearest love ! we shall be dead and cold
Before this morn may on the world arise :
Wouldst thou the glory of its dawn behold ?
Alas ! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes
On thine own heart — it is a paradise
Which everlasting Spring has made its own,
And, while drear winter fills the naked skies,
Sweet streams of sunny thought, and flowers
fresh-blown,
Are there, and weave their sounds and odours
into one.

XXVII.

“ In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
Which made them great the good will
ever find ;

The Revolt of Islam

And, though some envious shades may
interlope

Between the effect and it, One comes be-
hind

Who aye the future to the past will bind —
Necessity, whose sightless strength for ever
Evil with evil, good with good, must wind
In bands of union which no power may
sever :

They must bring forth their kind, and be
divided never !

XXVIII.

“The good and mighty of departed ages
Are in their graves, the innocent and
free,

Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages,
Who leave the vesture of their majesty
To adorn and clothe this naked world ;
—and we

Are like to them — such perish, but they
leave

All hope or love or truth or liberty

The Revolt of Islam

Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive,
To be a rule and law to ages that survive.

XXIX.

“ So be the turf heaped over our remains
Even in our happy youth, and that strange
lot,
Whate’er it be, when in these mingling
veins
The blood is still, be ours ; let sense and
thought
Pass from our being, or be numbered not
Among the things that are ; let those who
come
Behind, for whom our steadfast will has
bought
A calm inheritance, a glorious doom,
Insult with careless tread our undivided tomb.

XXX.

“ Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and
love,

The Revolt of Islam

Our happiness, and all that we have been,
Immortally must live and burn and move
When we shall be no more ; — the world
has seen
A type of peace ; and — as some most
serene
And lovely spot to a poor maniac's eye,
After long years, some sweet and moving
scene
Of youthful hope, returning suddenly,
Quells his long madness — thus man shall
remember thee.

XXXI.

“And Calumny meanwhile shall feed on
us
As worms devour the dead, and near the
throne
And at the altar most accepted thus
Shall sneers and curses be ; — what we
have done
None shall dare vouch, though it be truly
known ;

The Revolt of Islam

That record shall remain when they must pass
Who built their pride on its oblivion,
And fame, in human hope which sculptured
was,
Survive the perished scrolls of unenduring brass.

xxxii.

“The while we two, beloved, must depart,
And Sense and Reason, those enchanters
fair
Whose wand of power is hope, would bid
the heart
That gazed beyond the wormy grave
despair :
These eyes, these lips, this blood, seem
darkly there
To fade in hideous ruin ; no calm sleep,
Peopling with golden dreams the stagnant
air,
Seems our obscure and rotting eyes to
steep
In joy ; — but senseless death — a ruin dark
and deep !

The Revolt of Islam

XXXIII.

“These are blind fancies — reason cannot
know
What sense can neither feel nor thought
conceive ;
There is delusion in the world, and woe,
And fear, and pain — we know not whence
we live,
Or why, or how, or what mute Power may
give
Their being to each plant and star and
beast,
Or even these thoughts. — Come near
me ! I do weave
A chain I cannot break — I am possest
With thoughts too swift and strong for one
lone human breast.

XXXIV.

“Yes, yes — thy kiss is sweet, thy lips are
warm —
Oh, willingly, belovèd, would these eyes,

The Revolt of Islam

Might they no more drink being from thy
form,
Even as to sleep whence we again arise,
Close their faint orbs in death : I fear nor
prize
Aught that can now betide, unshared by
thee —
Yes, Love, when Wisdom fails, makes
Cythna wise ;
Darkness and death, if death be true, must
be
Dearer than life and hope if unenjoyed with thee.

XXXV.

“ Alas, our thoughts flow on with stream
whose waters
Return not to their fountain : Earth and
Heaven,
The Ocean and the Sun, the Clouds their
daughters,
Winter and Spring, and Morn and Noon
and Even,
All that we are or know, is darkly driven

The Revolt of Islam

Towards one gulf. — Lo ! what a change is
come

Since first I spake — but time shall be for-
given

Though it change all but thee !” She
ceased — night’s gloom

Meanwhile had fallen on earth from the sky’s
sunless dome.

XXXVI.

Though she had ceased, her countenance,
uplifted

To Heaven, still spake, with solemn glory
bright ;

Her dark deep eyes, her lips whose motions
gifted

The air they breathed with love, her locks
undight.

“ Fair star of life and love,” I cried, “ my
soul’s delight,

Why lookest thou on the crystalline skies ?

Oh, that my spirit were yon Heaven of
night

The Revolt of Islam

Which gazes on thee with its thousand
eyes !”

She turned to me and smiled — that smile was
Paradise !





Canto X.

I.



AS there a human spirit in the
steed,
That thus with his proud voice,
ere night was gone,
He broke our linkèd rest? or do indeed
All living things a common nature own,
And thought erect an universal throne,
Where many shapes one tribute ever bear?
And Earth, their mutual mother, does she
groan
To see her sons contend? and makes she
bare
Her breast, that all in peace its drainless stores
may share?

The Revolt of Islam

II.

I have heard friendly sounds from many a
tongue
Which was not human — the lone night-
ingale
Has answered me with her most soothing
song
Out of her ivy bower, when I sate pale
With grief, and sighed beneath; from
many a dale
The antelopes who flocked for food have
spoken
With happy sounds and motions that avail
Like man's own speech: and such was now
the token
Of waning night, whose calm by that proud
neigh was broken.

III.

Each night, that mighty steed bore me
abroad,
And I returned with food to our retreat,

The Revolt of Islam

And dark intelligence; the blood which
 flowed
 Over the fields had stained the courser's
 feet;
 Soon the dust drinks that bitter dew, —
 then meet
The vulture and the wild dog and the snake,
 The wolf and the hyæna gray, and eat
The dead in horrid truce: their throngs did
 make,
Behind the steed, a chasm like waves in a ship's
 wake.

IV.

For from the utmost realms of earth came
 pouring
 The banded slaves whom every despot sent
At that throned traitor's summons; like the
 roaring
 Of fire, whose floods the wild deer cir-
 cumvent
 In the scorched pastures of the south, so
 bent
The armies of the leaguèd kings around

The Revolt of Islam

Their files of steel and flame ; — the continent

Trembled, as with a zone of ruin bound,
Beneath their feet, the sea shook with their
navies' sound.

v.

From every nation of the earth they came,
The multitude of moving heartless things
Whom slaves call men: obediently they came,
Like sheep whom from the fold the shepherd brings
To the stall, red with blood ; their many
kings
Led them thus erring from their native
land, —
Tartar and Frank, and millions whom the
wings
Of Indian breezes lull, and many a band
The Arctic Anarch sent, and Idumea's sand,

vi.

Fertile in prodigies and lies. — So there
Strange natures made a brotherhood of ill.

The Revolt of Islam

The desert savage ceased to grasp in fear
His Asian shield and bow when, at the
will
Of Europe's subtler son, the bolt would
kill
Some shepherd sitting on a rock secure ;
But smiles of wondering joy his face
would fill,
And savage sympathy : those slaves impure
Each one the other thus from ill to ill did lure.

VII.

For traitorously did that foul Tyrant robe
His countenance in lies,—even at the
hour
When he was snatched from death, then o'er
the globe,
With secret signs from many a mountain-
tower,
With smoke by day and fire by night the
power
Of kings and priests, those dark conspira-
tors,

The Revolt of Islam

He called : — they knew his cause their
own, and swore . . .

Like wolves and serpents to their mutual wars
Strange truce, with many a rite which Earth
and Heaven abhors.

VIII.

Myriads had come — millions were on their
way ;

The Tyrant passed, surrounded by the
steel

Of hired assassins, through the public way,
Choked with his country's dead ; — his
footsteps reel

On the fresh blood — he smiles. “ Ay,
now I feel

I am a king in truth ! ” he said, and took
His royal seat, and bade the torturing
wheel

Be brought, and fire, and pincers, and the
hook,

And scorpions, that his soul on its revenge
might look.

The Revolt of Islam

IX.

“ But first go slay the rebels — why return
The victor bands? ” he said. “ Millions
yet live,
Of whom the weakest with one word might
turn
The scales of victory yet ; let none survive
But those within the walls — each fifth
shall give
The expiation for his brethren, here. —
Go forth, and waste and kill.” — “ O king,
forgive
My speech,” a soldier answered ; “ but we
fear
The spirits of the night, and morn is drawing
near ;

X.

“ For we were slaying still without remorse,
And now that dreadful chief beneath my
hand
Defenceless lay, when on a hell-black horse
An Angel bright as day, waving a brand

The Revolt of Islam

Which flashed among the stars, passed."

— "Dost thou stand

Parleying with me, thou wretch?" the king
replied.

"Slaves, bind him to the wheel; and of
this band

Whoso will drag that woman to his side
That scared him thus may burn his dearest foe
beside;

XI.

"And gold and glory shall be his. — Go
forth!"

They rushed into the plain. — Loud was
the roar

Of their career: the horsemen shook the
earth;

The wheeled artillery's speed the pave-
ment tore;

The infantry, file after file, did pour
Their clouds on the utmost hills. Five
days they slew

Among the wasted fields; the sixth saw
gore

The Revolt of Islam

Stream through the city ; on the seventh
the dew
Of slaughter became stiff, and there was peace
anew :

XII.

Peace in the desert fields and villages,
Between the gluttoned beasts and mangled
dead !
Peace in the silent streets ! save when the
cries
Of victims, to their fiery judgment led,
Made pale their voiceless lips who seemed
to dread,
Even in their dearest kindred, lest some
tongue
Be faithless to the fear yet unbetrayed :
Peace in the Tyrant's palace, where the
throng
Waste the triumphal hours in festival and
song !

XIII.

Day after day the burning sun rolled on
Over the death-polluted land — it came

The Revolt of Islam

Out of the east like fire, and fiercely shone
A lamp of autumn, ripening with its flame
The few lone ears of corn ;— the sky
became
Stagnate with heat, so that each cloud and
blast
Languished and died, — the thirsting air
did claim
All moisture, and a rotting vapour past
From the unburied dead, invisible and fast.

XIV.

First Want, then Plague, came on the
beasts ; their food
Failed, and they drew the breath of its
decay.
Millions on millions, whom the scent of blood
Had lured, or who from regions far away
Had tracked the hosts in festival array,
From their dark deserts, gaunt and wasting
now,
Stalked like fell shades among their
perished prey ;

The Revolt of Islam

In their green eyes a strange disease did
glow,
They sank in hideous spasm, or pains severe
and slow.

xv.

The fish were poisoned in the streams ; the
birds
In the green woods perished ; the insect
race
Was withered up ; the scattered flocks and
herds
Who had survived the wild beasts' hungry
chase
Died moaning, each upon the other's
face
In helpless agony gazing ; round the City
All night the lean hyænas their sad case
Like starving infants wailed — a woful ditty !
And many a mother wept, pierced with un-
natural pity.

xvi.

Amid the aërial minarets on high
The Ethiopian vultures fluttering fell

The Revolt of Islam

From their long line of brethren in the
sky,
Startling the concourse of mankind. —
Too well
These signs the coming mischief did fore-
tell :—
Strange panic first, a deep and sickening
dread,
Within each heart, like ice, did sink and
dwell,
A voiceless thought of evil, which did
spread
With the quick glance of eyes, like withering
lightnings shed.

XVII.

Day after day, when the year wanes, the
frosts
Strip its green crown of leaves, till all is
bare ;
So on those strange and congregated hosts
Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the
air

The Revolt of Islam

Groaned with the burden of a new despair ;
Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter
Feeds from her thousand breasts, though sleeping there
With lidless eyes lie Faith and Plague and Slaughter,
A ghastly brood conceived of Lethe's sullen water.

XVIII.

There was no food ; the corn was trampled down,
The flocks and herds had perished ; on the shore
The dead and putrid fish were ever thrown :
The deeps were foodless, and the winds no more
Creaked with the weight of birds, but, as before
Those wingèd things sprang forth, were void of shade ;

The Revolt of Islam

The vines and orchards, Autumn's golden
store,
Were burned ; so that the meanest food was
weighed
With gold, and Avarice died before the god it
made.

XIX.

There was no corn—in the wide market-
place
All loathliest things, even human flesh,
was sold ;
They weighed it in small scales — and many
a face
Was fixed in eager horror then ; his gold
The miser brought ; the tender maid,
grown bold
Through hunger, bared her scornèd charms
in vain ;
The mother brought her eldest-born,
controlled
By instinct blind as love, but turned again,
And bade her infant suck, and died in silent
pain.

The Revolt of Islam

xx.

Then fell blue Plague upon the race of
man.

“ Oh, for the sheathèd steel, so late which
gave

Oblivion to the dead when the streets ran
With brothers' blood! Oh, that the
earthquake's grave

Would gape, or ocean lift its stifling
wave! ”

Vain cries — throughout the streets, thou-
sands, pursued

Each by his fiery torture, howl and
rave,

Or sit in frenzy's unimagined mood
Upon fresh heaps of dead — a ghastly mul-
titude.

xxi.

It was not hunger now, but thirst. Each
well

Was choked with rotting corpses, and
became

The Revolt of Islam

A cauldron of green mist made visible
At sunrise. Thither still the myriads came,
Seeking to quench the agony of the flame
Which raged like poison through their
bursting veins ;
Naked they were from torture, without
shame,
Spotted with nameless scars and lurid blains,
Childhood and youth and age writhing in
savage pains.

XXII.

It was not thirst but madness ! Many saw
Their own lean image everywhere ; it went
A ghastlier self beside them, till the awe
Of that dread sight to self-destruction sent
Those shrieking victims ; some, ere life
was spent,
Sought, with a horrid sympathy, to shed
Contagion on the sound ; and others rent
Their matted hair, and cried aloud, " We
tread
On fire ! the avenging Power his hell on earth
has spread ! "

The Revolt of Islam

XXIII.

Sometimes the living by the dead were
hid.

Near the great fountain in the public
square,

Where corpses made a crumbling pyramid
Under the sun, was heard one stifled
prayer

For life, in the hot silence of the air ;
And strange 'twas 'mid that hideous heap to
see

Some shrouded in their long and golden
hair,

As if not dead, but slumbering quietly,
Like forms which sculptors carve, then love to
agony.

XXIV.

Famine had spared the palace of the king : —

He rioted in festival the while,
He and his guards and priests ; but Plague
did fling

One shadow upon all. Famine can smile

The Revolt of Islam

On him who brings it food, and pass, with
guile
Of thankful falsehood, like a courtier gray,
The house-dog of the throne ; but many
a mile
Comes Plague, a wingèd wolf, who loathes
alway
The garbage and the scum that strangers make
her prey.

xxv.

So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast,
Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely
dight
To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased
That lingered on his lips, the warrior's
might
Was loosened, and a new and ghastlier
night
In dreams of frenzy lapped his eyes ; he fell
Headlong, or with stiff eyeballs sate upright
Among the guests, or raving mad did tell
Strange truths, a dying seer of dark oppression's
hell.

The Revolt of Islam

XXVI.

The Princes and the Priests were pale with
terror ;

That monstrous faith wherewith they
ruled mankind

Fell, like a shaft loosèd by the bowman's
error,

On their own hearts : they sought, and
they could find

No refuge — 'twas the blind who led the
blind.

So through the desolate streets to the high
fane

The many-tongued and endless armies wind

In sad procession : each among the train

To his own Idol lifts his supplications vain.

XXVII.

“ O God ! ” they cried, “ we know our secret
pride

Has scorned thee, and thy worship, and
thy name ;

The Revolt of Islam

Secure in human power, we have defied
Thy fearful night; we bend in fear and
shame
Before thy presence; with the dust we
claim
Kindred; be merciful, O King of Heaven!
Most justly have we suffered for thy
fame
Made dim, but be at length our sins forgiven,
Ere to despair and death thy worshippers be
driven.

XXVIII.

“O King of glory! thou alone hast power!
Who can resist thy will? who can restrain
Thy wrath when on the guilty thou dost
shower
The shafts of thy revenge, a blistering
rain?
Greatest and best, be merciful again!
Have we not stabbed thine enemies? and
made
The Earth an altar, and the Heavens a
fane,

The Revolt of Islam

Where thou wert worshipped with their
blood, and laid
Those hearts in dust which would thy search-
less works have weighed?

XXIX.

“Well didst thou loosen on this impious City
Thine angels of revenge : recall them now ;
Thy worshippers, abased, here kneel for pity,
And bind their souls by an immortal vow :
We swear by thee ! and to our oath do thou
Give sanction from thine hell of fiends and
flame,
That we will kill with fire and torments
slow
The last of those who mocked thy holy name,
And scorned the sacred laws thy prophets did
proclaim.”

XXX.

Thus they with trembling limbs and pallid
lips
Worshipped their own hearts' image, dim
and vast,

The Revolt of Islam

Scared by the shade wherewith they would
eclipse
The light of other minds ; — troubled
they passed
From the great Temple ; — fiercely still
and fast
The arrows of the plague among them
fell,
And they on one another gazed aghast,
And through the hosts contention wild befell,
As each of his own god the wondrous works
did tell.

XXXI.

And Oromaze, Joshua, and Mahomet,
Moses and Buddh, Zerdusht and Brahm
and Foh,
A tumult of strange names, which never
met
Before as watchwords of a single woe,
Arose ; each raging votary 'gan to throw
Aloft his armèd hands, and each did howl
“ Our God alone is God ! ” — And slaughter
now

The Revolt of Islam

Would have gone forth, when from beneath
a cowl
A voice came forth which pierced like ice
through every soul.

XXXII.

'Twas an Iberian priest from whom it came,
A zealous man who led the legioned West,
With words which faith and pride had steeped
in flame,
To quell the unbelievers ; a dire guest
Even to his friends was he, for in his breast
Did hate and guile lie watchful, intertwined,
Twin serpents in one deep and winding
nest ;
He loathed all faith beside his own, and
pined
To wreak his fear of Heaven in vengeance on
mankind.

XXXIII.

But more he loathed and hated the clear light
Of wisdom and free thought, and more
did fear

The Revolt of Islam

Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce
the night,

Even where his Idol stood ; for far and
near

Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear
That faith and tyranny were trampled down ;
Many a pale victim doomed for truth to
share

The murderer's cell, or see with helpless
groan

The priests his children drag for slaves to serve
their own.

XXXIV.

He dared not kill the infidels with fire

Or steel, in Europe ; the slow agonies
Of legal torture mocked his keen desire :

So he made truce with those who did
despise

The expiation and the sacrifice,
That, though detested, Islam's kindred
creed

Might crush for him those deadlier ene-
mies ;

The Revolt of Islam

For fear of God did in his bosom breed
A jealous hate of man, an unreposing need.

XXXV.

“Peace, peace!” he cried. “When we are
dead, the day
Of judgment comes, and all shall surely
know
Whose God is God, each fearfully shall
pay
The errors of his faith in endless woe!
But there is sent a mortal vengeance now
On earth, because an impious race had
spurned
Him whom we all adore, — a subtle foe,
By whom for ye this dread reward was
earned,
And kingly thrones, which rest on faith, nigh
overturned.

XXXVI.

“Think ye, because ye weep and kneel and
pray,
That God will hush the pestilence? It rose

The Revolt of Islam

Even from beneath his throne, where, many
a day,
His mercy soothed it to a dark repose :
It walks upon the earth to judge his
foes ;
And what are thou and I, that he should
deign
To curb his ghastly minister, or close
The gates of death ere they receive the
twain
Who shook with mortal spells his undefended
reign ?

XXXVII.

“ Ay, there is famine in the gulf of hell,
Its giant worms of fire for ever yawn, —
Their lurid eyes are on us ! Those who
fell
By the swift shafts of pestilence ere dawn
Are in their jaws ! They hunger for the
spawn
Of Satan, their own brethren who were sent
To make our souls their spoil. See ! see !
they fawn

The Revolt of Islam

Like dogs, and they will sleep, with luxury
spent,
When those detested hearts their iron fangs
have rent !

XXXVIII.

“ Our God may then lull Pestilence to sleep :
Pile high the pyre of expiation now,
A forest’s spoil of boughs, and on the
heap
Pour venomous gums, which sullenly and
slow,
When touched by flame, shall burn and
melt and flow,
A stream of clinging fire, — and fix on high
A net of iron, and spread forth below
A couch of snakes and scorpions, and the
fry
Of centipedes and worms, earth’s hellish
progeny.

XXXIX.

“ Let Laon and Laone on that pyre,
Linked tight with burning brass, perish !
— then pray

The Revolt of Islam

That, with this sacrifice, the withering ire
Of Heaven may be appeased." He ceased,
and they
A space stood silent, as far, far away
The echoes of his voice among them died ;
And he knelt down upon the dust, alway
Muttering the curses of his speechless pride,
Whilst shame and fear and awe the armies did
divide.

XL.

His voice was like a blast that burst the portal
Of fabled hell ; and, as he spake, each one
Saw gape beneath the chasms of fire immortal,
And Heaven above seemed cloven, where,
on a throne
Girt round with storms and shadows, sate
alone
Their King and Judge — fear killed in every
breast
All natural pity then, a fear unknown
Before, and, with an inward fire possest,
They raged like homeless beasts whom burn-
ing woods invest.

The Revolt of Islam

XL I.

'Twas morn. — At noon the public crier went
forth,
Proclaiming through the living and the
dead,
“The Monarch saith that his great empire’s
worth
Is set on Laon and Laone’s head :
He who but one yet living here can lead,
Or who the life from both their hearts can
wring,
Shall be the kingdom’s heir — a glorious
meed !
But he who both alive can hither bring
The Princess shall espouse, and reign an equal
King.”

XL II.

Ere night the pyre was piled, the net of iron
Was spread above, the fearful couch below ;
It overtopped the towers that did environ
That spacious square, for Fear is never
slow

The Revolt of Islam

To build the thrones of Hate, her mate
and foe,
So she scourged forth the maniac multitude
To rear this pyramid — tottering and slow,
Plague-stricken, foodless, like lean herds pursued
By gadflies, they have piled the heath and gums
and wood.

XLIII.

Night came, a starless and a moonless gloom.
Until the dawn, those hosts of many a
nation
Stood round that pile, as near one lover's
tomb
Two gentle sisters mourn their desolation :
And in the silence of that expectation
Was heard on high the reptiles' hiss and
crawl —
It was so deep — save when the devasta-
tion
Of the swift pest, with fearful interval,
Marking its path with shrieks, among the
crowd would fall.

The Revolt of Islam

XLIV.

Morn came, — among those sleepless multitudes,
Madness and Fear and Plague and Famine still
Heaped corpse on corpse, as in autumnal woods
The frosts of many a wind with dead leaves fill
Earth's cold and sullen brooks ; in silence,
still
The pale survivors stood ; ere noon, the fear
Of Hell became a panic, which did kill
Like hunger or disease, with whispers drear,
As "Hush ! hark ! Come they yet ? Just
Heaven ! thine hour is near !"

XLV.

And priests rushed through their ranks,
some counterfeiting
The rage they did inspire, some mad indeed

The Revolt of Islam

With their own lies; they said their god
was waiting
To see his enemies writhe and burn and
bleed, —
And that, till then, the snakes of hell had
need
Of human souls : — three hundred furnaces
Soon blazed through the wide City, where,
with speed,
Men brought their infidel kindred to appease
God's wrath, and, while they burned, knelt
round on quivering knees.

XLVI.

The noontide sun was darkened with that
smoke,
The winds of eve dispersed those ashes
gray.
The madness which these rites had lulled
awoke
Again at sunset. — Who shall dare to say
The deeds which night and fear brought
forth, or weigh

The Revolt of Islam

In balance just the good and evil there?

He might man's deep and searchless heart
display,

And cast a light on those dim labyrinths
where

Hope near imagined chasms is struggling with
despair.

XLVII.

'Tis said, a mother dragged three children
then

To those fierce flames which roast the
eyes in the head,

And laughed and died; and that unholy
men,

Feasting like fiends upon the infidel dead,
Looked from their meal, and saw an
Angel tread

The visible floor of heaven, and it was she!

And on that night one without doubt or
dread

Came to the fire, and said, "Stop, I am he!
Kill me!" — they burned them both with
hellish mockery.

The Revolt of Islam

XLVIII.

And one by one, that night, young maidens
came,
Beauteous and calm, like shapes of living
stone
Clothed in the light of dreams, and by the
flame,
Which shrank as overgorged, they laid
them down,
And sung a low sweet song, of which
alone
One word was heard, and that was Liberty ;
And that some kissed their marble feet,
with moan
Like love, and died ; and then that they
did die
With happy smiles, which sunk in white tran-
quillity.





Canto XI.

I.



HE saw me not—she heard me
not—alone

Upon the mountain's dizzy
brink she stood ;

She spake not, breathed not, moved not—
there was thrown

Over her look the shadow of a mood

Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
A thought of voiceless depth ;—she stood
alone ;

Above, the heavens were spread ;—be-
low, the flood

Was murmuring in its caves ;—the wind
had blown

Her hair apart, through which her eyes and
forehead shone.

The Revolt of Islam

II.

A cloud was hanging o'er the western mountains ;
Before its blue and moveless depth were flying
Gray mists poured forth from the unresting fountains
Of darkness in the north : — the day was dying : —
Sudden, the sun shone forth, its beams were lying
Like boiling gold on ocean, strange to see,
And on the shattered vapours which, defying
The power of light in vain, tossed restlessly
In the red Heaven, like wrecks in a tempestuous sea.

III.

It was a stream of living beams, whose bank
On either side by the cloud's cleft was made ;

The Revolt of Islam

And, where its chasms that flood of glory
drank,

Its waves gushed forth like fire, and, as
if swayed

By some mute tempest, rolled on *her* ;
the shade

Of her bright image floated on the river

Of liquid light, which then did end and
fade —

Her radiant shape upon its verge did shiver ;
Aloft, her flowing hair like strings of flame did
quiver.

IV.

I stood beside her, but she saw me not —

She looked upon the sea, and skies, and
earth ;

Rapture and love and admiration wrought

A passion deeper far than tears or mirth,

Or speech or gesture, or whate'er has
birth

From common joy ; which with the speech-
less feeling

That led her there united, and shot forth

The Revolt of Islam

From her far eyes a light of deep revealing,
All but her dearest self from my regard concealing.

v.

Her lips were parted, and the measured breath
Was now heard there ; — her dark and intricate eyes,
Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death,
Absorbed the glories of the burning skies,
Which, mingling with her heart's deep ecstasies,
Burst from her looks and gestures ; — and a light
Of liquid tenderness, like love, did rise
From her whole frame, — an atmosphere
which quite
Arrayed her in its beams, tremulous and soft
and bright.

vi.

She would have clasped me to her glowing
frame ;
Those warm and odorous lips might soon
have shed

The Revolt of Islam

On mine the fragrance and the invisible flame
Which now the cold winds stole ; — she
would have laid
Upon my languid heart her dearest head ;
I might have heard her voice, tender and
sweet ;
Her eyes, mingling with mine, might soon
have fed
My soul with their own joy. — One mo-
ment yet
I gazed — we parted then, never again to meet !

VII.

Never but once to meet on Earth again !
She heard me as I fled — her eager tone
Sunk on my heart, and almost wove a
chain
Around my will to link it with her own,
So that my stern resolve was almost
gone.
“ I cannot reach thee ! whither dost thou fly ?
My steps are faint. — Come back, thou
dearest one —

The Revolt of Islam

Return, ah me ! return !” The wind passed
by
On which those accents died, faint, far, and
lingeringly.

VIII.

Woe ! Woe ! that moonless midnight ! —
Want and Pest
Were horrible, but one more fell doth rear,
As in a hydra’s swarming lair, its crest
Eminent among those victims — even the
Fear
Of Hell : each girt by the hot atmosphere
Of his blind agony, like a scorpion stung
By his own rage upon his burning bier
Of circling coals of fire ; but still there clung
One hope, like a keen sword on starting
threads uphung : —

IX.

Not death — death was no more refuge or
rest ;
Not life — it was despair to be ! — not
sleep,

The Revolt of Islam

For fiends and chasms of fire had dispossessed
All natural dreams ; to wake was not to
weep,
But to gaze, mad and pallid, at the leap
To which the Future like a snaky scourge,
Or like some tyrant's eye which aye doth
keep
Its withering beam upon its slaves, did urge
Their steps : — they heard the roar of Hell's
sulphureous surge.

x.

Each of that multitude, alone, and lost
To sense of outward things, one hope yet
knew ;
As on a foam-girt crag some seaman tost
Stares at the rising tide, or like the
crew
Whilst now the ship is splitting through
and through ;
Each, if the tramp of a far steed was heard,
Started from sick despair, or if there
flew

The Revolt of Islam

One murmur on the wind, or if some
word,
Which none can gather yet, the distant crowd
has stirred.

XI.

Why became cheeks, wan with the kiss of
death,
Paler from hope? they had sustained
despair.
Why watched those myriads with suspended
breath,
Sleepless a second night? They are not
here,
The victims, and hour by hour, a vision
drear,
Warm corpses fall upon the clay-cold
dead;
And even in death their lips are writhed
with fear. —
The crowd is mute and moveless — over-
head
Silent Arcturus shines — “Ha! hear’st thou
not the tread

The Revolt of Islam

XII.

“Of rushing feet? laughter? the shout, the
scream
Of triumph not to be contained? See!
hark!
They come, they come! give way!” Alas,
ye deem
Falsely — ’tis but a crowd of maniacs stark,
Driven, like a troop of spectres, through
the dark
From the choked well, whence a bright
death-fire sprung,
A lurid earth-star which dropped many a
spark
From its blue train, and, spreading widely,
clung
To their wild hair, like mist the topmost pines
among.

XIII.

And many, from the crowd collected there,
Joined that strange dance in fearful sym-
pathies ;

The Revolt of Islam

There was the silence of a long despair
When the last echo of those terrible
cries

Came from a distant street, like agonies
Stifled afar. — Before the Tyrant's throne
All night his aged senate sate, their
eyes

In stony expectation fixed ; when one
Sudden before them stood, a Stranger and
alone.

XIV.

Dark priests and haughty warriors gazed on
him

With baffled wonder, for a hermit's vest
Concealed his face ; but, when he spake, his
tone,

Ere yet the matter did their thoughts
arrest, —

Earnest, benignant, calm, as from a breast
Void of all hate or terror — made them start ;

For, as with gentle accents he addressed
His speech to them, on each unwilling heart
Unusual awe did fall — a spirit-quelling dart.

The Revolt of Islam

xv.

“Ye Princes of the Earth, ye sit aghast
Amid the ruin which yourselves have
made,
Yes, Desolation heard your trumpet’s blast,
And sprang from sleep!—dark Terror
has obeyed
Your bidding. Oh, that I, whom ye have
made
Your foe, could set my dearest enemy free
From pain and fear! But evil casts a
shade
Which cannot pass so soon, and Hate must
be
The nurse and parent still of an ill progeny.

xvi.

“Ye turn to Heaven for aid in your distress;
Alas! that ye, the mighty and the wise,
Who, if ye dared, might not aspire to less
Than ye conceive of power, should fear
the lies

The Revolt of Islam

Which thou, and thou, didst frame for
mysteries
To blind your slaves : — consider your own
thought,
An empty and a cruel sacrifice
Ye now prepare for a vain idol wrought
Out of the fears and hate which vain desires
have brought.

XVII.

“ Ye seek for happiness — alas the day !
Ye find it not in luxury nor in gold,
Nor in the fame, nor in the envied sway,
For which, O willing slaves to Custom
old,
Severe taskmistress, ye your hearts have
sold.
Ye seek for peace, and, when ye die, to
dream
No evil dreams : all mortal things are cold
And senseless then ; if aught survive, I deem
It must be love and joy, for they immortal
seem.

The Revolt of Islam

XVIII.

“ Fear not the future, weep not for the past.
Oh, could I win your ears to dare be
now
Glorious and great and calm ! that ye would
cast
Into the dust those symbols of your woe,
Purple and gold and steel ! that ye would
go
Proclaiming to the nations whence ye came
That Want and Plague and Fear from
slavery flow ;
And that mankind is free, and that the
shame
Of royalty and faith is lost in freedom’s fame !

XIX.

“ If thus, ’tis well : if not, I come to say
That Laon — ” while the Stranger spoke,
among
The council sudden tumult and affray
Arose, for many of those warriors young

The Revolt of Islam

Had on his eloquent accents fed and
hung
Like bees on mountain-flowers: they knew
the truth,
And from their thrones in vindication
sprung;
The men of faith and law then without
ruth
Drew forth their secret steel, and stabbed each
ardent youth.

xx.

They stabbed them in the back, and sneered
— a slave
Who stood behind the throne those corpses
drew
Each to its bloody, dark, and secret grave;
And one more daring raised his steel anew
To pierce the Stranger. “What hast thou
to do
With me, poor wretch?” Calm, solemn,
and severe,
That voice unstrung his sinews, and he
threw

The Revolt of Islam

His dagger on the ground, and, pale with
fear,
Sate silently — his voice then did the Stranger
rear.

XXI.

“ It doth avail not that I weep for ye —
Ye cannot change, since ye are old and
gray,
And ye have chosen your lot — your fame
must be
A book of blood, whence in a milder day
Men shall learn truth, when ye are
wrapped in clay :
Now ye shall triumph. I am Laon’s friend,
And him to your revenge will I betray,
So ye concede one easy boon. Attend !
For now I speak of things which ye can apprehend.

XXII.

“ There is a People mighty in its youth,
A land beyond the Oceans of the West,
Where, though with rudest rites, Freedom
and Truth

The Revolt of Islam

Are worshipped. From a glorious
Mother's breast
Who, since high Athens fell, among the
rest
Sate like the Queen of Nations, but in woe,
By inbred monsters outraged and oppressed,
Turns to her chainless child for succour now,
It draws the milk of Power in Wisdom's fullest
flow.

XXIII.

"That land is like an eagle whose young
gaze
Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden
plume
Floats moveless on the storm, and in the
blaze
Of sunrise gleams when Earth is wrapped
in gloom ;
An epitaph of glory for the tomb
Of murdered Europe may thy fame be made,
Great People ! As the sands shalt thou
become ;

The Revolt of Islam

Thy growth is swift as morn when night
must fade ;
The multitudinous Earth shall sleep beneath
thy shade.

XXIV.

“ Yes, in the desert, then, is built a home
For Freedom ! Genius is made strong to
rear
The monuments of man beneath the dome
Of a new Heaven ; myriads assemble
there
Whom the proud lords of man, in rage
or fear,
Drive from their wasted homes : the boon
I pray
Is this — that Cythna shall be convoyed
there, —
Nay, start not at the name — America !
And then to you this night Laon will I betray.

XXV.

“ With me do what you will. I am your
foe ! ”

The Revolt of Islam

The light of such a joy as makes the stare
Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow
Shone in a hundred human eyes. —

“Where, where

Is Laon? Haste! fly! drag him swiftly
here!

We grant thy boon.” — “I put no trust
in ye;

Swear by the Power ye dread.” — “We
swear, we swear!”

The Stranger threw his vest back suddenly,
And smiled in gentle pride, and said, “Lo!
I am he!”





Canto XII.

I.



HE transport of a fierce and monstrous gladness
Spread through the multitudinous streets, fast flying
Upon the winds of fear; from his dull
madness
The starveling waked, and died in joy;
the dying,
Among the corpses in stark agony lying,
Just heard the happy tidings, and in hope
Closed their faint eyes; from house to
house replying
With loud acclaim, the living shook Heaven's
cope,
And filled the startled Earth with echoes:
morn did ope

The Revolt of Islam

II.

Its pale eyes then; and lo! the long
array
Of guards in golden arms, and priests
beside,
Singing their bloody hymns, whose garbs
betray
The blackness of the faith it seems to
hide;
And see the Tyrant's gem-wrought chariot
glide
Among the gloomy cowls and glittering
spears —
A Shape of light is sitting by his side,
A child most beautiful. I' the midst appears
Laon — exempt alone from mortal hopes and
fears.

III.

His head and feet are bare, his hands are
bound
Behind with heavy chains, yet none do
wreak

The Revolt of Islam

Their scoffs on him, though myriads throng
 around ;
 There are no sneers upon his lip which
 speak
 That scorn or hate has made him bold ;
 his cheek
Resolve has not turned pale — his eyes are
 mild
 And calm, and, like the morn about to
 break,
Smile on mankind — his heart seems reconciled
To all things and itself, like a reposing child.

IV.

Tumult was in the soul of all beside,
 Ill joy, or doubt, or fear ; but those who
 saw
Their tranquil victim pass felt wonder glide
 Into their brain, and became calm with
 awe. —
See, the slow pageant near the pile doth
 draw.

The Revolt of Islam

A thousand torches in the spacious square,
Borne by the ready slaves of ruthless law,
Await the signal round : the morning fair
Is changed to a dim night by that unnatural
glare.

v.

And see, beneath a sun-bright canopy,
Upon a platform level with the pile,
The anxious Tyrant sit, enthroned on high,
Girt by the chieftains of the host : all
smile
In expectation, but one child : the while
I, Laon, led by mutes, ascend my bier
Of fire, and look around : each distant isle
Is dark in the bright dawn ; towers far and
near
Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous
atmosphere.

vi.

There was such silence through the host
as when
An earthquake, trampling on some pop-
ulous town,

The Revolt of Islam

Has crushed ten thousand with one tread,
and men

Expect the second ; all were mute but one,
That fairest child, who, bold with love,
alone

Stood up before the King, without avail
Pleading for Laon's life — her stifled
groan

Was heard — she trembled like one aspen
pale

Among the gloomy pines of a Norwegian vale.

VII.

What were his thoughts, linked in the morn-
ing sun

Among those reptiles, stingless with delay,
Even like a tyrant's wrath? — The signal-
gun

Roared — hark, again ! In that dread
pause he lay

As in a quiet dream — the slaves obey —
A thousand torches drop, — and hark ! the
last

The Revolt of Islam

Bursts on that awful silence ; far away,
Millions, with hearts that beat both loud
and fast,
Watch for the springing flame expectant and
aghast.

VIII.

They fly — the torches fall — a cry of fear
Has startled the triumphant ! — they
recede !
For, ere the cannon's roar has died, they
hear
The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and
a steed,
Dark and gigantic, with the tempest's
speed
Bursts through their ranks : a woman sits
thereon,
Fairer, it seems, than aught that earth
can breed,
Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the
dawn,
A spirit from the caves of daylight wandering
gone.

The Revolt of Islam

IX.

All thought it was God's Angel come to
sweep
The lingering guilty to their fiery grave ;
The Tyrant from his throne in dread did
leap, —
Her innocence his child from fear did
save ;
Scared by the faith they feigned, each
priestly slave
Knelt for his mercy whom they served with
blood,
And, like the reflux of a mighty
wave
Sucked into the loud sea, the multitude
With crushing panic fled in terror's altered
mood.

X.

They pause, they blush, they gaze, — a
gathering shout
Bursts, like one sound from the ten
thousand streams

The Revolt of Islam

Of a tempestuous sea : — that sudden rout
One checked who never in his mildest
dreams
Felt awe from grace or loveliness, the
seams
Of his rent heart so hard and cold a creed
Had seared with blistering ice : — but he
misdeems
That he is wise whose wounds do only bleed
Inly for self; thus thought the Iberian Priest
indeed,

XI.

And others too thought he was wise to see
In pain and fear and hate something
divine ;
In love and beauty, no divinity.
Now with a bitter smile, whose light did
shine
Like a fiend's hope upon his lips and
eyne,
He said, and the persuasion of that sneer
Rallied his trembling comrades — “ Is it
mine

The Revolt of Islam

To stand alone, when kings and soldiers fear
A woman? Heaven has sent its other victim
here."

XII.

"Were it not impious," said the King, "to
break

Our holy oath?" — "Impious to keep it,
say!"

Shrieked the exulting Priest. "Slaves, to
the stake

Bind her, and on my head the burden lay
Of her just torments: — at the Judgment-
day

Will I stand up before the golden throne

Of Heaven, and cry, 'To thee did I betray
An Infidel! but for me she would have
known

Another moment's joy! — the glory be thine
own!'"

XIII.

They trembled, but replied not, nor obeyed,
Pausing in breathless silence. Cythna
sprung

The Revolt of Islam

From her gigantic steed, who, like a shade
Chased by the winds, those vacant streets
among

Fled tameless, as the brazen rein she flung
Upon his neck, and kissed his moonèd brow.

A piteous sight, that one so fair and
young

The clasp of such a fearful death should woo
With smiles of tender joy, as beamed from
Cythna now.

XIV.

The warm tears burst in spite of faith and
fear

From many a tremulous eye, but, like
soft dews

Which feed Spring's earliest buds, hung
gathered there,

Frozen by doubt, — alas ! they could not
choose

But weep ; for, when her faint limbs did
refuse

To climb the pyre, upon the mutes she
smiled ;

The Revolt of Islam

And with her eloquent gestures, and the
hues

Of her quick lips, even as a weary child
Wins sleep from some fond nurse with its
caresses mild,

xv.

She won them, though unwilling, her to
bind

Near me, among the snakes. When
there had fled

One soft reproach that was most thrilling
kind,

She smiled on me, and nothing then we
said,

But each upon the other's countenance
fed

Looks of insatiate love ; the mighty veil

Which doth divide the living and the
dead

Was almost rent, the world grew dim and
pale,—

All light in Heaven or Earth beside our love
did fail.

The Revolt of Islam

XVI.

Yet — yet — one brief relapse, like the last
beam
Of dying flames, the stainless air around
Hung silent and serene — a blood-red
gleam
Burst upwards, hurling fiercely from the
ground
The globèd smoke; I heard the mighty
sound
Of its uprise, like a tempestuous ocean;
And through its chasms I saw as in a
swound
The tyrant's child fall without life or
motion
Before his throne, subdued by some unseen
emotion. —

XVII.

And is this death? — The pyre has disap-
peared,
The Pestilence, the Tyrant, and the
throng;

The Revolt of Islam

The flames grow silent — slowly there is
heard
The music of a breath-suspending song,
Which, like the kiss of love when life is
young,
Steeps the faint eyes in darkness sweet and
deep ;
With ever-changing notes it floats along,
Till on my passive soul there seemed to
creep
A melody, like waves on wrinkled sands that
leap.

XVIII.

The warm touch of a soft and tremulous
hand
Wakened me then ; lo ! Cythna sate re-
clined
Beside me, on the waved and golden sand
Of a clear pool, upon a band o'ertwined
With strange and star-bright flowers which
to the wind
Breathed divine odour ; high above was
spread

The Revolt of Islam

The emerald heaven of trees of unknown
kind,
Whose moonlike blooms and bright fruit
overhead
A shadow which was light upon the waters shed.

XIX.

And round about sloped many a lawny
mountain,
With incense-bearing forests, and vast
caves
Of marble radiance, to that mighty fountain ;
And, where the flood its own bright mar-
gin laves,
Their echoes talk with its eternal waves,
Which from the depths whose jagged caverns
breed
Their unreposing strife it lifts and
heaves, —
Till through a chasm of hills they roll, and
feed
A river deep, which flies with smooth but
arrowy speed.

The Revolt of Islam

xx.

As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,
A boat approached, borne by the musical
air
Along the waves which sung and sparkled
under
Its rapid keel — a wingèd shape sate there,
A child with silver-shining wings, so fair
That, as her bark did through the waters
glide,
The shadow of the lingering waves did
wear
Light, as from starry beams ; from side to side
While veering to the wind her plumes the bark
did guide.

xxi.

The boat was one curved shell of hollow
pearl,
Almost translucent with the light divine
Of her within ; the prow and stern did curl,
Hornèd on high, like the young moon
supine,

The Revolt of Islam

When o'er dim twilight mountains dark
with pine
It floats upon the sunset's sea of beams,
Whose golden waves in many a purple
line
Fade fast, till, borne on sunlight's ebbing
streams,
Dilating, on earth's verge the sunken meteor
gleams.

XXII.

Its keel has struck the sands beside our
feet. —
Then Cythna turned to me, and from her
eyes,
Which swam with unshed tears, a look more
sweet
Than happy love, a wild and glad sur-
prise,
Glanced as she spake: "Ay, this is Para-
dise,
And not a dream, and we are all united!
Lo! that is mine own child, who in the
guise



Cythna in Paradise.

"The glossy darkness of her streaming hair
Fell o'er the snowy child."



The Revolt of Islam

Of madness came, like day to one benighted
In lonesome woods ; my heart is now too well
requited ! ”

XXIII.

And then she wept aloud, and in her
arms
Clasped that bright Shape, less marvel-
lously fair
Than her own human hues and living
charms ;
Which, as she leaned in passion's silence
there,
Breathed warmth on the cold bosom of
the air,
Which seemed to blush and tremble with
delight ;
The glossy darkness of her streaming
hair
Fell o'er that snowy child, and wrapped from
sight
The fond and long embrace which did their
hearts unite.

The Revolt of Islam

XXIV.

Then the bright child, the plumèd Seraph,
came,
And fixed its blue and beaming eyes on
mine,
And said: "I was disturbed by tremulous
shame
When first we met, yet knew that I was
thine,
From the same hour in which thy lips
divine
Kindled a clinging dream within my brain,
Which ever waked when I might sleep,
to twine
Thine image with *her* memory dear — again
We meet; exempted now from mortal fear or
pain.

XXV.

"When the consuming flames had wrapped
ye round,
The hope which I had cherished went
away;

The Revolt of Islam

I fell in agony on the senseless ground,
And hid mine eyes in dust, and far astray
My mind was gone, when, bright like
dawning day,
The Spectre of the Plague before me
flew,
And breathed upon my lips, and seemed
to say,
'They wait for thee, beloved!' — then I
knew
The death-mark on my breast, and became
calm anew.

XXVI.

"It was the calm of love — for I was dying.
I saw the black and half-extinguished
pyre
In its own gray and shrunken ashes lying;
The pitchy smoke of the departed fire
Still hung in many a hollow dome and
spire
Above the towers, like night; beneath whose
shade,
Awed by the ending of their own desire,

The Revolt of Islam

The armies stood ; a vacancy was made
In expectation's depth, and so they stood
dismayed.

XXVII.

“The frightful silence of that altered mood
The tortures of the dying clove alone,
Till one uprose among the multitude,
And said : ‘The flood of time is rolling
on ;
We stand upon its brink, whilst *they* are
gone
To glide in peace down death's mysterious
stream.
Have ye done well ? They moulder, flesh
and bone,
Who might have made this life's envenomed
dream
A sweeter draught than ye will ever taste,
I deem.

XXVIII.

“These perish as the good and great of yore
Have perished, and their murderers will
repent.

The Revolt of Islam

Yes, vain and barren tears shall flow be-
fore

Yon smoke has faded from the firma-
ment, —

Even for this cause, that ye, who must
lament

The death of those that made this world
so fair,

Cannot recall them now ; but there is lent
To man the wisdom of a high despair
When such can die, and he live on and linger
here.

XXIX.

“ Ay, ye may fear — not now the Pestilence,
From fabled hell as by a charm with-
drawn, —

All power and faith must pass, since calmly
hence

In pain and fire have unbelievers gone ;
And ye must sadly turn away, and moan
In secret, to his home each one returning,
And to long ages shall this hour be
known ;

The Revolt of Islam

And slowly shall its memory, ever burning,
Fill this dark night of things with an eternal
morning.

XXX.

“‘ For me the world is grown too void and cold,
Since hope pursues immortal destiny
With steps thus slow — therefore shall ye
behold
How those who love, yet fear not, dare to
die ;
Tell to your children this !’ Then sud-
denly
He sheathed a dagger in his heart, and fell ;
My brain grew dark in death, and yet to me
There came a murmur from the crowd to tell
Of deep and mighty change which suddenly
befell.

XXXI.

“ Then suddenly I stood, a wingèd Thought,
Before the immortal Senate, and the seat
Of that star-shining spirit, whence is wrought
The strength of its dominion, good and
great,

The Revolt of Islam

The better Genius of this world's estate.
His realm around one mighty Fane is spread,
Elysian islands bright and fortunate,
Calm dwellings of the free and happy dead,
Where I am sent to lead." These wingèd
words she said,

XXXII.

And with the silence of her eloquent smile
Bade us embark in her divine canoe.
Then at the helm we took our seat, the
while
Above her head those plumes of dazzling
hue
Into the wind's invisible stream she
threw,
Sitting beside the prow: like gossamer
On the swift breath of morn, the vessel
flew
O'er the bright whirlpools of that fountain
fair,
Whose shores receded fast whilst we seemed
lingering there.

The Revolt of Islam

XXXIII.

Till down that mighty stream, dark, calm,
and fleet,
Between a chasm of cedarn mountains
riven,
Chased by the thronging winds whose view-
less feet,
As swift as twinkling beams, had under
Heaven
From woods and waves wild sounds and
odours driven,
The boat fled visibly — three nights and
days,
Borne like a cloud through morn and
noon and even,
We sailed along the winding watery ways
Of the vast stream, a long and labyrinthine
maze.

XXXIV.

A scene of joy and wonder to behold
That river's shapes and shadows changing
ever,

The Revolt of Islam

When the broad sunrise filled with deepening gold
Its whirlpools where all hues did spread
and quiver,
And where melodious falls did burst and shiver
Among rocks clad with flowers, the foam
and spray
Sparkled like stars upon the sunny
river;
Or, when the moonlight poured a holier day,
One vast and glittering lake around green
islands lay.

xxxv.

Morn, noon, and even, that boat of pearl
outran
The streams which bore it, like the arrowy cloud
Of tempest, or the speedier thought of man
Which flieth forth and cannot make
abode;

The Revolt of Islam

Sometimes through forests, deep like
night, we glode,
Between the walls of mighty mountains
crowned
With Cyclopean piles, whose turrets proud,
The homes of the departed, dimly frowned
O'er the bright waves which girt their dark
foundations round,

XXXVI.

Sometimes between the wide and flowering
meadows
Mile after mile we sailed, and 'twas de-
light
To see far off the sunbeams chase the shadows
Over the grass: sometimes beneath the
night
Of wide and vaulted caves whose roofs
were bright
With starry gems we fled, whilst from their
deep
And dark green chasms shades beautiful
and white

The Revolt of Islam

Amid sweet sounds across our path would
 sweep,
Like swift and lovely dreams that walk the
 waves of sleep.

XXXVII.

And ever as we sailed our minds were full
 Of love and wisdom, which would over-
 flow
In converse wild and sweet and wonderful,
 And in quick smiles whose light would
 come and go
Like music o'er wide waves, and in the flow
Of sudden tears, and in the mute caress —
 For a deep shade was cleft, and we did
 know
That virtue, though obscured on Earth, not
 less
Survives all mortal change in lasting loveliness.

XXXVIII.

Three days and nights we sailed, as thought
 and feeling

The Revolt of Islam

Number delightful hours — for through
the sky
The spherèd lamps of day and night, reveal-
ing
New changes and new glories, rolled on
high,
Sun, moon, and moonlike lamps, the
progeny
Of a diviner Heaven, serene and fair:
On the fourth day, wild as a wind-
wrought sea
The stream became, and fast and faster
bare
The spirit-wingèd boat, steadily speeding there.

XXXIX.

Steady and swift, where the waves rolled like
mountains
Within the vast ravine whose rifts did
pour
Tumultuous floods from their ten thousand
fountains,
The thunder of whose earth-uplifting roar

The Revolt of Islam

Made the air sweep in whirlwinds from
the shore,
Calm as a shade, the boat of that fair child
Securely fled that rapid stress before,
Amid the topmost spray and sunbows
wild
Wreathed in the silver mist: in joy and pride
we smiled.

XL.

The torrent of that wide and raging river
Is passed, and, our aërial speed suspended.
We look behind; a golden mist did quiver
Where its wild surges with the lake were
blended:
Our bark hung there, as on a line suspended
Between two heavens, that windless wave-
less lake
Which four great cataracts from four vales,
attended
By mists, aye feed: from rocks and clouds
they break,
And of that azure sea a silent refuge make.

The Revolt of Islam

XLI.

Motionless resting on the lake awhile,
I saw its marge of snow-bright mountains
rear
Their peaks aloft, I saw each radiant isle,
And in the midst, afar, even like a sphere
Hung in one hollow sky, did there appear
The Temple of the Spirit ; on the sound
Which issued thence drawn nearer and
more near,
Like the swift moon this glorious earth
around,
The charmèd boat approached, and there its
haven found.





Note on the Revolt of Islam

By Mrs. Shelley

SHELLEY possessed two remarkable qualities of intellect—a brilliant imagination, and a logical exactness of reason. His inclinations led him (he fancied) almost alike to poetry and metaphysical discussions. I say “he fancied,” because I believe the former to have been paramount, and that it would have gained the mastery even had he struggled against it. However, he said that he deliberated at one time whether he should dedicate himself to poetry or metaphysics; and, resolving on the former, he educated himself for it, discarding in a great measure his philosophical pursuits, and engaging himself in the study of

Note on the Revolt of Islam

the poets of Greece, Italy, and England. To these may be added a constant perusal of portions of the Old Testament, — the Psalms, the Book of Job, the Prophet Isaiah, and others, the sublime poetry of which filled him with delight.

As a poet, his intellect and compositions were powerfully influenced by exterior circumstances, and especially by his place of abode. He was very fond of travelling, and ill health increased this restlessness. The sufferings occasioned by a cold English winter made him pine, especially when our colder spring arrived, for a more genial climate. In 1816 he again visited Switzerland, and rented a house on the banks of the Lake of Geneva ; and many a day, in cloud or sunshine, was passed alone in his boat — sailing as the wind listed, or weltering on the calm waters. The majestic aspect of nature ministered such thoughts as he afterwards enwove in verse. His lines on the Bridge of the Arve, and his “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,” were written at this time. Perhaps during this summer his genius was checked by association with another poet whose nature was utterly dissimilar to his own, yet

Note on the Revolt of Islam

who, in the poem he wrote at that time, gave tokens that he shared for a period the more abstract and etherealized inspiration of Shelley. The saddest events awaited his return to England; but such was his fear to wound the feelings of others that he never expressed the anguish he felt, and seldom gave vent to the indignation roused by the persecutions he underwent; while the course of deep unexpressed passion, and the sense of injury, engendered the desire to embody themselves in forms defecated of all the weakness and evil which cling to real life.

He chose therefore for his hero a youth nourished in dreams of liberty, some of whose actions are in direct opposition to the opinions of the world; but who is animated throughout by an ardent love of virtue, and a resolution to confer the boons of political and intellectual freedom on his fellow creatures. He created for his youth a woman such as he delighted to imagine — full of enthusiasm for the same objects; and they both, with will unvanquished, and the deepest sense of the justice of their cause, met adversity and death. There exists in this poem a memorial of a friend of his

Note on the Revolt of Islam

youth. The character of the old man who liberates Laon from his tower-prison, and tends on him in sickness, is founded on that of Doctor Lind, who, when Shelley was at Eton, had often stood by to befriend and support him, and whose name he never mentioned without love and veneration.

During the year 1817 we were established at Marlow in Buckinghamshire. Shelley's choice of abode was fixed chiefly by this town being at no great distance from London, and its neighbourhood to the Thames. The poem was written in his boat, as it floated under the beech-groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighbouring country, which is distinguished for peculiar beauty. The chalk hills break into cliffs that overhang the Thames, or form valleys clothed with beech; the wilder portion of the country is rendered beautiful by exuberant vegetation; and the cultivated part is peculiarly fertile. With all this wealth of Nature which, either in the form of gentlemen's parks or soil dedicated to agriculture, flourishes around, Marlow was inhabited (I hope it is altered now) by a very poor population. The women are lace-makers, and lose

Note on the Revolt of Islam

their health by sedentary labour, for which they were very ill paid. The poor-laws ground to the dust not only the paupers, but those who had risen just above that state, and were obliged to pay poor-rates. The changes produced by peace following a long war, and a bad harvest, brought with them the most heartrending evils to the poor. Shelley afforded what alleviation he could. In the winter, while bringing out his poem, he had a severe attack of ophthalmia, caught while visiting the poor cottages. I mention these things — for this minute and active sympathy with his fellow creatures gives a thousandfold interest to his speculations, and stamps with reality his pleadings for the human race.

The poem, bold in its opinions and uncompromising in their expression, met with many censurers, not only among those who allow of no virtue but such as supports the cause they espouse, but even among those whose opinions were similar to his own. I extract a portion of a letter written in answer to one of these friends. It best details the impulses of Shelley's mind, and his motives: it was written with entire unreserve; and is there-

Note on the Revolt of Islam

fore a precious monument of his own opinion of his powers, of the purity of his designs, and the ardour with which he clung, in adversity and through the valley of the shadow of death, to views from which he believed the permanent happiness of mankind must eventually spring.

“MARLOW, Dec. 11, 1817.

“I have read and considered all that you say about my general powers, and the particular instance of the poem in which I have attempted to develop them. Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the interest which your admonitions express. But I think you are mistaken in some points with regard to the peculiar nature of my powers, whatever be their amount. I listened with deference and self-suspicion to your censures of ‘The Revolt of Islam ;’ but the productions of mine which you commend hold a very low place in my own esteem ; and this reassures me, in some degree at least. The poem was produced by a series of thoughts which filled my mind with unbounded and sustained enthusiasm. I felt the precariousness of my life, and I engaged in this task, resolved to leave some record of my-

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self. Much of what the volume contains was written with the same feeling — as real, though not so prophetic — as the communications of a dying man. I never presumed indeed to consider it anything approaching to faultless; but, when I consider contemporary productions of the same apparent pretensions, I own I was filled with confidence. I felt that it was in many respects a genuine picture of my own mind. I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists; in sympathy, and that part of the imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course, I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind. But, when you advert to my Chancery-paper, a cold, forced, unimpassioned, insignificant piece of cramped

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and cautious argument, and to the little scrap about 'Mandeville,' which expressed my feelings indeed, but cost scarcely two minutes' thought to express, as specimens of my powers more favourable than that which grew as it were from 'the agony and bloody sweat' of intellectual travail; surely I must feel that, in some manner, either I am mistaken in believing that I have any talent at all, or you in the selection of the specimens of it. Yet, after all, I cannot but be conscious, in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquillity which is the attribute and accompaniment of power. This feeling alone would make your most kind and wise admonitions, on the subject of the economy of intellectual force, valuable to me. And, if I live, or if I see any trust in coming years, doubt not but that I shall do something, whatever it may be, which a serious and earnest estimate of my powers will suggest to me, and which will be in every respect accommodated to their utmost limits."

THE END.

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